

# UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

# EFFECT OF DIFFERENT STRESS RATIO ON FATIGUE CRACK PROPAGATION OF RICE HUSK POLYPROPYLENE COMPOSITES UNDER CONSTANT AMPLITUDE LOADING

# SITY AINY BINTI NOR MOHAMED

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SITY AINY BINTI NOR MOHAMED

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

April 2021

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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

## EFFECT OF DIFFERENT STRESS RATIO ON FATIGUE CRACK PROPAGATION OF RICE HUSK POLYPROPYLENE COMPOSITES UNDER CONSTANT AMPLITUDE LOADING

By

#### SITY AINY BINTI NOR MOHAMED

April 2021

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The presence of excessive agricultural by product waste often create issues in the disposal process and contributing to environmental pollution. Thus, the conversion of this agro waste into potential raw materials for production has gained attention in research. Comparing the physical properties of composite fibreboard material made from agro waste compared with conventional fibreboard, it has been discovered that this composite material can be used for low-cost construction. These components application on ceiling board are subjected to constant loads from the roof trusses, gravity load and the weight of the structure itself which lead to fatigue failure, crack initiation and crack growth progressively. In order to maintain the safety design of components, the component performance prediction is important to facilitate the management of risk assessment, inspection and maintenance scheduling.

Thus, this study considers the evaluation of fatigue behavior and fatigue crack growth of polypropylene composites with rice husk fibers from the point of experimental and fracture mechanics theory. The main objective of this research is to define the fatigue behavior and crack growth rate of rice husk reinforced polypropylene composite and determination of the fatigue life prediction significantly through the application of mathematical representation in using equivalent initial flaw size (EIFS) concept. Fatigue behavior of materials characterized by fatigue life and energy dissipation in comparison

to the various stress ratios R = 0.1, R = 0.3 and R = 0.5 for the stresses  $\sigma_{75}, \sigma_{80}, \sigma_{85}, \sigma_{90}$ 

and  $\sigma_{95}$ . Fatigue tests were performed at constant stress according to ASTM D3479/D3479M. The specimens used were based D638-03 standards. The highest value of energy released for R = 0.1, in the range between 5 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> and 30 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>, while for R = 0.3 in the range between 2 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> and 16 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>, and the lowest energy released for R = 0.5 in the range of 2 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> and 5 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>.

In the characterization of the fatigue crack behavior, the fatigue crack growth is described by plotting the relationship between the log fatigue crack growth rates, da/dN against the log strain energy release rate,  $\Delta\sqrt{G}$  as a relationship in a Paris representation. The experiment was conducted on compact tension specimens in accordance with ASTM D647-13a standards for the stress between 80-90% of the ultimate tensile strength for R = 0.1, 0.3, and 0.5. The values of the Paris constants of *C* and *n* are found to increase with increasing ratio of applied stresses. The value of *C* increases with the values of,  $7 \times 10^{-17}$ ,  $2 \times 10^{-16}$ , and  $1 \times 10^{-15}$  respectively. While the value of constant *n* also showed an increase with readings of 6.6657, 6.7076 and 6.8303 at stress ratios R = 0.1, 0.3, and 0.5. Both of these parameters give the value of the coefficient of determination,  $R^2$  in the range of more than 0.85.

The predictive model are respectively expressed in mathematical representations as,  $S = 24.436N^{-0.058}$ ,  $S = 46.364N^{-0.149}$ , and  $S = 58.687N^{-0.147}$  for the quantitative assessment of fatigue damage, by applying the back extrapolation method in the equivalent initial flaw size (EIFS) approach, which the correlation gives the value of the coefficient of determination,  $R^2$  in the range 0.89 to 0.99. This stress life curve model, encourages the ability to monitor fatigue crack propagation, and to identify initial measurements of defects resulting from non-uniform structures enabled in the evaluation and characterization of the fatigue life. This relationship provides good accuracy in the logarithmic mean squared error, based on statistical analysis, which is in the range of 1.5% to 2.5%. With this, a fatigue failure monitoring method as well as predicting the fatigue life of natural fiber composites was produced using a combination of EIFS approaches.

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

### KESAN NISBAH TEGASAN YANG BERBEZA TERHADAP KOMPOSIT POLIPROPILENA SEKAM PADI DI BAWAH PEMBEBANAN AMPLITUD MALAR

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Kewujudan sisa agro secara berlebihan sering menimbulkan masalah dalam proses pembuangan dan seterusnya menyumbang kepada pencemaran persekitaran. Oleh demikian, penukaran sisa agro menjadi bahan mentah yang berpotensi untuk pengeluaran telah mendapat perhatian dalam penyelidikan. Perbandingan sifat fizikal bahan papan serat komposit yang terbuat daripada sisa agro dibandingkan dengan papan serat konvensional, diperhatikan bahawa bahan komposit ini dapat digunakan untuk kerja pembinaan bagi kategori pembinaan kos rendah. Komponen ini tertakluk kepada beban berterusan dari kekuda bumbung, graviti dan berat struktur itu sendiri yang membawa kepada kegagalan lesu, permulaan retak dan pertumbuhan retak secara beransur-ansur. Dalam usaha untuk mengekalkan keselamatan reka bentuk komponen, ramalan prestasi komponen tersebut adalah penting bagi memudahkan penilaian risiko dalam pengurusan, penjadualan pemeriksaan dan penyelenggaraan.

Justeru, kajian ini mempertimbangkan penilaian tingkah laku lesu dan pertumbuhan retak lesu komposit polipropilena serat sekam padi dari sudut eksperimen dan teori mekanik patah. Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mentakrifkan kelakuan lesu dan retak lesu komposit polipropilena sekam padi sekaligus menentukan signifikan ramalan hayat lesu melalui perwakilan matematik dengan aplikasi konsep ukuran cacat awal yang setara. Kelakuan lesu bahan dicirikan oleh kadar pelepasan tenaga terikan melalui perbandingan kepada nisbah tegasan iaitu R = 0.1, R = 0.3 dan R = 0.5 bagi tegasan pada  $\sigma_{75}$ ,  $\sigma_{80}$ ,  $\sigma_{85}$ ,  $\sigma_{90}$  dan  $\sigma_{95}$ . Ujikaji lesu dijalankan pada tegasan malar mengikut ASTM D3479/D3479M. Spesimen yang digunakan adalah berdasarkan piawaian D638-03. Nilai tenaga yang paling tinggi dilepaskan bagi R = 0.1, adalah dalam julat antara 5 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> dan 30 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>, manakala bagi R = 0.3 dalam julat antara 2 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> dan 16 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>, dan tenaga dilepaskan paling rendah bagi R = 0.5 dalam julat 2 kJ / m<sup>3</sup> dan 5 kJ / m<sup>3</sup>.

Dalam pencirian kelakuan retak lesu, pertumbuhan retak lesu diterangkan melalui plot hubungan antara log kadar pertumbuhan retak lesu, da/dN melawan log kadar pelepasan tenaga terikan,  $\Delta\sqrt{G}$  sebagai hubungan dalam satu perwakilan Paris. Ujikaji ini dijalankan ke atas spesimen tegangan padat mengikut piawaian ASTM D647-13a merentasi beban tegasan antara 80-90% dari kekuatan tegangan muktamad untuk R =0.1, 0.3, dan 0.5. Nilai pemalar Paris iaitu C dan n didapati meningkat dengan peningkatan nisbah tegasan yang dikenakan. Nilai C meningkat dengan nilai masingmasing adalah  $7 \times 10^{-17}$ ,  $2 \times 10^{-16}$ , dan  $1 \times 10^{-15}$ . Manakala nilai constant n juga menunjukkan peningkatan dengan bacaan 6.6657, 6.7076 dan 6.8303 pada nisbah tegasan R=0.1, 0.3, dan 0.5. Kedua-dua pekali ini memberikan nilai pekali penentuan,  $R^2$ dalam julat lebih daripada 0.85.

Model ramalan yang dinyatakan dalam perwakilan matematik sebagai  $S = 24.436N^{-0.058}$ ,  $S = 46.364N^{-0.149}$ , dan  $S = 58.687N^{-0.147}$  merupakan penilaian secara kuantitatif bagi kerosakan lesu, menerapkan kaedah ekstrapolasi belakang dalam pendekatan ukuran cacat awal yang setara (EIFS), memberikan nilai pekali penentuan,  $R^2$  dalam julat 0.89 hingga 0.99. Model lengkung *S*-*N* ini, mendorong kemampuan pemantauan perambatan retak lesu, dan untuk mengenal pasti ukuran awal kecacatan yang dihasilkan dari struktur yang tidak seragam berkemampuan dalam penilaian dan pencirian hayat lesu. Hubungan ini memberikan ketepatan yang baik dalam ralat logaritman kuasa dua min, berdasarkan analisis statistik, iaitu dalam julat 1.5% hingga 2.5%. Dengan ini, satu kaedah pemantauan kegagalan lesu sekaligus meramal hayat lesu komposit serat semulajadi dihasilkan dengan menggunakan gabungan pendekatan EIFS.

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# LIST OF SYMBOLS

А	Constant
a	Crack length
a <sub>i</sub>	Current crack length
$a_{f}$	Final crack length
a <sub>c</sub>	Critical crack length
В	Fatigue strength exponent
в	Constant
С	Paris coefficient
da/dN	Fatigue crack growth rate
Ε	Young's Modulus
E <sub>RMSLE</sub>	Root mean square logarithm error
Е	Strain
$\varepsilon^*m$	Matrix strain
$arepsilon^* f$	Fibre strain
${\cal E}_{ym}$	Matrix yield strain
f	Geometry factor
Gc	Critical strain energy release rate
$\Delta G$	Strain energy release rate
G <sub>min</sub>	Minimum strain energy release rate
G <sub>max</sub>	Maximum strain energy release rate
g(a)	Crack growth rate function
$K_{\min}$	Minimum stress intensity factor
$K_{\rm max}$	Maximum stress intensity factor
$K_c$	Critical stress intensity factor

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$\Delta K$	Stress intensity factor range
$\Delta K_{th}$	Threshold stress intensity factor
$K_{Ic}$	Fracture toughness
п	Material coefficient
$N_{_f}$	Cycle to failure
$N_{_i}$	Current life cycles
$N_{ m exp}$	Experimental fatigue life
$N_{\scriptscriptstyle cal}$	Calculated fatigue life
P <sub>max</sub>	Maximum load
$P_{\min}$	Minimum load
Q	Heat
R	Ratio
$R^2$	Coefficient of determination
$S_y$	Yield stress
S <sub>ut</sub>	Ultimate strength
S <sub>e</sub>	Material fatigue limit
S	Geometry correction value
$SS_k$	Sums of the square one of tested parameter
$SS_S$	Sums of the square standard
$SS_T$	Total sums of the square
SSe	Sums of the square error
$SS_t$	Sums of the square treatment
Syj	Sum of all trial results involving parameter at level
$\varDelta U$	Internal energy
W	Energy released
${\mathcal Y}_i$	Characteristic value in grey relational grade
$\sigma_{_f}$ *	Fiber stress

$\sigma_{_a}$	Stress amplitude
$\sigma_{_m}$	Mean stress
$\sigma_{_{ m max}}$	Maximum stress
$\sigma_{_{ m min}}$	Minimum stress
$\sigma_{_f}$	Material strength coefficient
$\sigma_{\scriptscriptstyle UTS}$	Ultimate tensile strength
$\xi_i$	Grey relational coefficient
5	Distinguishing coefficient
${\gamma}_i$	Grey relational grade

C

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BRHA	Black rice husk ash
CDF	Crack driving force
СТ	Compact tension
DOE	Design of experiments technique
DOF	Degree of freedom
EIFS	Equivalent initial flaw size
EPFM	Elastic-plastic fracture mechanics
GRC	Grey Relational Coefficient
GRG	Grey Relational Grade
HDPE	High density polyethylene
HRR	Rockwell R Hardness Number
IB	Internal strength
KT	Kitagawa-Takahashi
LDPE	Low-density polyethene
LEFM	Linear elastic fracture mechanics
MOE	Modulus of elasticity
MOR	Modulus of rupture
NDI	Non-destructive inspection
NDT	Non-destructive test
OA	Orthogonal array
RCBD	Randomized complete block design
RH	Rice husk

- SEM Scanning electron microscopy
- SFRP Short fibre reinforced polymer
- SIF Stress intensity factor
- S/N Signal to noise
- S-N Stress life

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- SSE Sum square error
- TTCI The time to crack initiation
- WRHA White rice husk ash

### CHAPTER 1

# **INTRODUCTION**

#### 1.1 Background

The last several decades have seen polymers replacing numerous traditional materials, including metals, for a host of applications. Such is the case because polymers provide several advantages compared to traditional materials. Polymers offer several benefits, such as ease of processing, lesser cost, and higher productivity (Saheb & Jog, 1999). In a majority of the applications, the specific characteristics of polymers help change fibres or filler material to obtain the high modulus or strength requirement (Omrani et al., 2016). A fibre-reinforced polymer (FRP) composite comprises a polymer matrix meshed with strong fibres made from carbon, aramid, or glass. Vinyl monomers in polymer chains are small molecules having double-bonded carbon atoms; their monomers are used for producing vinyl polymers (Mallakpour & Zadehnazari, 2013). This is the most prominent polymer family. Typically, the vinyl polymer classification comprises elastomers, thermosetting (vinyl esters), and thermoplastic (Saba et al., 2014).

Presently, a majority of the bio-fibre matrix consists of thermoplastic substances. The widely-used thermoplastics for such applications are polyethene, polypropylene (PP), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). At the same time, epoxy, phenolic, and polyester resins are routinely used for thermosetting matrices (Puglia et al., 2005). Compared to traditional substances, fibre-reinforced polymers offer better advantages considering specific characteristics. The fibre-based reinforcing material is integrated with the polymers to enhance their mechanical and physical characteristics. Fibre-reinforced polymers are versatile and interesting since they are biodegradable, lightweight, strong, stiff, and have low friction coefficient and high resistance against corrosion. These mechanical aspects are crucial for several engineering domains. Hence, there has been immense effort to use polymers for several commercial applications.

Wood flour and fibres are the most widely natural fibres used in the development of natural fibre reinforced polymer composites (NFRPCs); however, there are concerns about growing environmental damage (global warming and biodiversity) due to deforestation which also contributes to forest degradation has prompted researchers to look for cheaper and available alternatives other than wood. Research and studies have been developed on the application of agricultural products and agro-industrial by-products that can be used as a direct substitute for wood in the development of polymer composites. The development and advancement of the use of agriculture residues as an alternative to wood fibre has begun to be an option in some applications while reducing the high demand for wood fibre. Among the potential wood substitutes, for example include kenaf, flax, rice husk (RH), jute, sisal, hemp, and bamboo (La Mantia et al., 2011; Burgstaller, 2014).

Paddy (a member of the monocotyledon group of plants and botanically known as Oryza sativa L.) is one of the most widely grown crops and covers about 1% of the earth's surface. It is a major food crop for a group of people especially in South Asia and Africa. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global rice production (un-milled rice or paddy) reached more than 740 million metric tons in 2014, with more than 90% of global rice production produced by Asia (Monika, 2013; Bandumula, 2018). At the world level, China and India are ranked first and second among rice producing countries, with an average production of 202 and 155 million metric tons per year. Other major producers include Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Vietnam with an average share of 69, 51, and 43 million metric tons each year. The largest rice exporters reported are involving countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Pakistan. Due to the large rice production each year, a large number of these by-products have no commercial value. Thus, various attempts have been made to vary the use of these biomass materials (Johar et al., 2012).

Several applications that are dependent on composites reinforced using natural fibres comprise aspects of cyclic loading. Such loading leads to cumulative damage and decrease in material characteristics. Hence, it is vital to conduct a study that focuses on the estimation of the fatigue life of composites reinforced using natural fibres; such a study is required primarily for situations involving cyclic loading. When composites exhibit fatigue failure, it typically means that the material is reaching failure as a result of the varying loads applied on a specific point (Campbell, 2012). Fatigue failure can be defined as material deterioration under repeated cycles of stress and strain, resulting in progressive cracks that eventually result in fractures. Fatigue is associated with structural failure under cyclical loads generally at much lower loads than is required for quasi-static failures where plastic deformation is low and slow. Fatigue failure depends on various factors, such as material type and condition (Kluger & Lagoda, 2013), component geometry, load type (Pawliczek & Kluger, 2013), stress conditions, and residual stress (Coupard et al., 2008).

Fatigue is one of the leading causes of mechanical failure on various structures and these occur suddenly and result in huge losses in terms of life and property. Although there is no exact percentage of mechanical failure caused by fatigue, many studies have suggested that 50% to 90% of all mechanical failure is causes by fatigue failure (Pook, 2007). The three main causes of fatigue failure are including improper maintenance, fabrication defects, and deficiencies in design. The study also emphasizes that the cost of fractures caused by fatigue can be dramatically reduced by using proper methods of analysis and fatigue technology. However, knowledge of fatigue failure in composite materials, components and structures is less clear and incomprehensible, where it is difficult to predict by engineers due to the complex nature of this failure mechanism (Ye et al., 2018; Wicaksono et al., 2018). Damage assessment for composite materials, specifically premature failure. Moreover, the ability of a material to sustain by constant amplitude loadings against fatigue failure at the structural level are significant concerns in the manufacturing engineering domain.

Fatigue led deformation of a fibre reinforced composite material is relatively complicated and is a function of how much the fibre-matrix interface is damaged (Harris, 1999). Liang et al., (2012) studied the tension-tension fatigue characteristics of glass epoxy and biaxial flax-based composite materials. It was found that despite glass/epoxy materials demonstrating increased resistance to fatigue as a consequence of better static strength, the stress-life (*S-N*) curve are steeper, which means that cyclic load will lead to a higher reduction in fatigue strength. It should be noted that there is a reduction in fatigue stress levels. Composites do not witness an immediate reduction in strength in response to fatigue; however, material stiffness typically reduces. Liang et al., (2012) indicated that a glass/epoxy composite had a stiffness reduction in the 50-70% range during its fatigue cycle. On the other hand, flax/epoxy-based composite materials demonstrated relatively stable fatigue characteristics and the reduction in stiffness ranged between 15% and 20%.

There are several efforts to use RH by taking advantage of its constituent features and composition. Therefore, its use in composite fabrication has been suggested by researchers (Premalal et al., 2002; Quirino & Larock, 2011). Silica, a key component of RH, has been shown to enhance the mechanical properties of various polymeric materials (Kumagi & Matsuo, 2013). Gerardi and Minelli (1998) analysed the potential of wood replacement with RH in the manufacture of particle board wood-based composites and observed that the physical characteristics of RH-reinforced composites are similar to wood fibre-based composites. Some of these natural fibres have been used effectively as reinforcement in the manufacture of particle board (Ciannamea et al., 2010), thus further strengthening the potential of RH as reinforcement. In addition, the incorporation of RH as filler for composite panels has also been proposed (Leiva et al., 2007; Hakeem et al., 2015). RH composites are found to provide better dimensional stability when exposed to higher humidity and resistance as well as termite or biological attacks, when compared to wood fibre reinforced composites, this property is an added advantage of RH composites (Chen et al., 2015). The potential for strengthening RH has been studied by many researchers, and research reviews have been put in place recently. However, a study of the structural properties of RH in natural fibre reinforced polymer composite (NFRPC) expansion and enhancement applications has not been carried out in more detail.

Crack growth in composite materials at the structural level is because of bond separation and the movement concerns and build-up of dislocations owing to structure irregularities. Four failure mechanisms are recognised, namely, delamination, matrix cracking, interfacial debonding, and fibre breakage (Božić et al., 2014). Hence, the material surface is the crack nucleation and growth plane for the initial stage of the crack, i.e., before failure. It may be understood as the material reacting to the critical load imposed on it. When a load is applied at the area of a structural defect, the load is not immediately critical; however, after a threshold, it begins to create crack growth (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). The crack may grow at a stable or unstable rate, and this is determined by the material resistance against continuous crack growth. However, when the increasing load stage is reached, structure or component failure is because of the inability of the material concerning the services function. The essential identifiers for fatigue failure are load amplitude and load type; increasing values of load lead to fractures. Considering the micro-level changes, local plasticity leads to elastic stress as a consequence of the load. Defective surfaces or impurities lead to stress concentration, and the fatigue crack propagates in this area, thereby leading to small-scale cracks. Furthermore, deformation is a significant aspect determining the beginning of cracks on a plane; the deformation orientation can be determined by observing the grain. This plane is referred to as the deformation process zone. Increasing the count of load cycles leads to local plastic deformities, and they accumulate and lead to stress and the creation of areas where fatigue cracks initiate (Qiu et al., 2015). This stage has cracks that are in the micro or macro meter scale. The significant characteristics at this stage include load level and the characteristics of the micro-structure around the crack. Aspects like orientation, grain boundary, and characteristics that are not suitable for the local grain around the crack tip may create resistance against sustained crack growth.

# 1.2 Problem Statements

The construction industries are developing rapidly due to the increased demands of the growing population and higher standards of living. As a result, there has been a need to design high-performance synthetic construction materials. Some materials like carbon fibre and glass fibre-reinforced composites are currently available in the market. However, these composite materials are quite costly and are generally used in high-tech applications. Hence, lightweight and high-strength wood or wood-based composite fibres are the preferred choice for construction owing to their reasonable prices. On the other hand, many deforestation activities are being carried out for collecting wood that have adversely affected the soil structure (leading to soil erosion, earthquakes and similar natural disasters) and environment, leading to global warming. As a result, there has been an interest in finding or developing alternative raw materials for the construction industry.

Agriculture and its related activities are dominant amongst the developing countries. These activities have generated large quantities of natural fibres like sugarcane, paddy, palm oil, etc. An increase in agricultural activities is responsible for the accumulation of agricultural waste in the environment, which can further cause many environmental issues. For solving the problems related to the disposal of agricultural wastes and developing alternative raw materials for the construction industry, researchers have investigated the use of lignocellulosic agricultural waste as an alternative to wood panels. It has been noted that the natural fibres produced in the form of agricultural waste, display excellent mechanical and physical properties. One such material that is used in the construction industry includes rice husk (RH). RH are the by-products of rice production and are regarded as a probable alternative for wood or wood-based boards. RH in the formation of various kinds of boards shows good properties such tough and abrasive, low bulk density (90-150 kg/m3), has a unique composition and resists weathering.

RH consists of a high concentration of silica in the amorphous and crystalline (quartz) forms. The presence of the amorphous form of silica in RH is responsible for its pozzolanic effect. This pozzolanic effect displays cementitious properties that increase the rate of strength gain by the material. The RH particleboards are seen to be an inexpensive and cost-effective alternative to high-end materials. These boards can be easily glued together or to other decorative laminates with appropriate adhesives. The RH boards are used in many building interiors like ceiling linings, walls, partitions and for insulation purposes during construction. The results indicated that the behaviour of the RH particleboards was similar to that displayed by other wood-based boards.

Fibreboard is seen to be a highly heterogeneous and anisotropic material. If properly designed, it shows a good load-bearing capacity and dimensional stability (Beer et al. 2008). However, any deformation, fracture or cracks occurring in these materials can adversely affect the structure of the fibreboard. The cracks appear at the ceilings and can intersect with the walls if the roof trusses shift a little due to seasonal changes in humidity or temperature. All these changes and fluctuations can lead to the uplifting of the trusses, further causing a shift or movement of roof trusses. This issue commonly arises in the interior walls.

The cracks usually appear on the walls perpendicular to the direction and movement of the trusses. These cracks run across the ceilings to the walls giving rise to a continuous crack that propagates through the ceiling. This form of crack highlights a structural problem for building. Any engineer designs a building with an aim to stabilise all the components involved in the development of the structure and stresses that can affect the structure. Hence, the problems related to the building material must be recognised and viable raw materials have to be used for the various building applications. Standard and appropriate testing processes are used in the fibreboard industries and can generate a lot of valuable data that can be used for optimising the use of the available products. One such test that is used in these industries is called the internal bond strength test. The failure occurs at the localised flaws present on the material and hence is best described using the fracture mechanics instead of the classical strength theory.

The mechanical properties of the fibreboards that were made using natural materials and placed in the in-plane direction that combines the core and face layers, were investigated using the standard test methods like fracture energy tests, internal bond strength and bending strength. The bending experiments can lead to the build-up of pressure on the top layer face and tension in the bottom face layer of the panel. It was noted that the specimens usually failed the tension face layer and the transition zone between the face and core layers. Furthermore, the bending strength only described the failure of the complete sample, however, it could isolate the core layer's behaviour.

A majority of the fracture mechanical standards assumed the presence of the self-similar crack propagation, wherein self-similar indicated that 2 samples having differing crack lengths from one another. However, this assumption was violated in the case of the materials that developed process zones, like the fibres bridging in the composites. In

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these materials, the initial cracks did not have any process zone, but the zone develops during the propagation. Under Mode I loading, the fibreboard cracks tend to propagate in a straight line and are perpendicular to the loads that are applied. However, these cracks cannot be easily detected due to a lot of material that bridges the crack surfaces. Hence, the propagation is not considered a self-similar crack propagation. Therefore, it is essential to identify and recognise the initial cracks for effectively treating the materials.

Numerous methods have been suggested regarding component design with a specific focus on failures caused by fatigue cracks. It is feasible to formulate an applicable design framework using the concepts from fracture mechanics in order to model fatigue cracks and the associated damage. During this technique, the applied driving load force is estimated for the point where the crack begins. Several factors need to be known in order to estimate fatigue crack growth propagation rate; these factors are material characteristics, service load, geometrical aspects of the crack and the components (Qi & Wang, 2013). The use of this technique has been emphasised in applications where safety and reliability of industrial components are paramount.

The safe-life design technique is the typical method for the assessment of material life during health and safety inspection of engineering structures. When this technique is employed, the assumption is that the present component design is devoid of weaknesses and defects. Stress amplitude is the primary characteristic used to model component fatigue life; additionally, different stress ratio is another aspect that helps determine whether the material has finite or infinite fatigue life and this information is based only on the material's fatigue characteristics, among other aspects (James 2014). During the testing process, if the component suffers from minor damage, it is immediately replaced with a new replica even if the original component had still well functioned; this is done to ensure component design safety. Furthermore, this method does not mandate any other inspection concerning the structure or its components during their design life.

This study focused on fatigue crack growth using numerical, experimental, and theoretical observations, along with the fracture mechanics theory. The research has emphasised and built upon the subject of fatigue life estimation of structure components considering higher loads applied to the crack tip. Presently, the focus is to obtain new information of life prediction on constant loading concerning the crack growth rate of natural fibre composite material under various stress ratios. It is possible to define the size of the initial deformation of the defect on the analysed component. Detection may begin with the appearance of a discontinuity that has the propensity to degenerate into micro cracks. The time from this event till the proliferation of macro cracks or complete material failure can be recorded. Structural reliability may be ensured by employing monitoring methods, more-frequent inspections, determining material characteristics and using fracture mechanics. Higher structural reliability leads to a lesser need for replacing critical parts.



The fundamental assumption made during the determination of structural integrity using this technique is that it is possible to keep using the components until any part of the component reaches a predetermined critical level. This way, before the damaged structure is unable to handle the load, the crack can increase to the critical levels. Hence, it is presupposed that the structure can handle repeated loading through the nucleation of the initial defects and that the defect can proliferate by way of cracks. This study employed the above mentioned as the basis for evaluating component failure. This approach encouraged the authors to assess the propagation of fatigue cracks, determine the size of the initial defect exist due to structural non-uniformity, and estimate component fatigue life. The authors formulated equivalent initial flaw size concept technique to determine the structural properties, components service life and the crack growth rate in order to assess the creation of a fatigue crack monitoring.

# 1.3 Research Objectives

In this study, there are four main objectives that need to be met to ensure the novelty of the study can be achieved. The research objectives can be specified as following:

- 1) Optimization of injection moulding parameters to obtain the optimum tensile strength and quality of specimen using integrated Taguchi method and grey relational analysis (GRA).
- Identification of the fatigue behaviour of risk husk reinforced polypropylene composite when subjected to different stress ratios under constant amplitude loading.
- 3) Formulation a mathematical representation by associating fatigue crack growth through an equivalent initial flaw-size concept.
- 4) Verification of the mathematical representation for ascertaining the accuracy of the expression.

### 1.4 Research Scope

The scope of this study includes tests conducted on a laboratory scale. The material used is rice husk composite where the geometry is based on the standards set in ASTM D3479 / D3479M. The determination of the mechanical behaviour of a material is obtained from a tensile test, while the fatigue behaviour is determined through a cyclic test. The implementation of the test is done according to the ASTM D638-3 requirements to determine the mechanical behaviour of the material. To determine the fatigue of the material, the implementation of the test according to the method ASTM D3479 / D3479M is carried out. By focusing on the characterization of fatigue crack propagation behaviour, three load ratios were used to study the influence of stress ratio on fatigue

life. The test was performed on five constant amplitude loads at values of 0.75  $\sigma_{\rm UTS}$  to

0.95  $\sigma_{\rm UTS}$  at three stress ratios, R of 0.1, 0.3 and 0.5. The rate of fatigue crack propagation

is calculated based on the existing model and the accuracy of the test data on the predicted life is obtained through correlation analysis.

Specimen fatigue life was studied in relation to the effect of variable load ratios. The effect of stress ratio is assessed through the method of analysis proposed through the Paris equation. Based on the length of the crack opening, coefficient values such as C and n are obtained by plotting the distribution of experimental data in the correlation graph of da/dN vs strain energy release rate (SERR). Mathematical prediction model to determine the overall fatigue life is published using the back-extrapolation method where the equivalent initial flaw size (EIFS) value is determined based on the findings obtained through experiments. Through this method, complete fracture is considered to occur when the value of  $K_{max}$  is equal to the value of fracture toughness,  $K_{IC}$ . With a combination of Basquin's equation approaches, an equation for predicting fatigue life at different stress ratio conditions can be determined.

Through the proposed model, the representation of fatigue life is only focused on the analysis based on the fatigue crack propagation model in term of the EIFS method. However, there are many factors that affect the parameters of fatigue crack propagation. Thus, the validation of the fatigue crack propagation model produced was also evaluated using scatter band error analysis, correlation and the root mean square logarithm error,

 $E_{RMSLE}$  also conducted to support the findings obtained. Through the analysis of the correlation relationship between the proposed model and the experimental model, the matching of the distributions presented for verification, it can highlight the scientific contribution in this study.

### 1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis follows the alternative thesis template provided by the Universiti Putra Malaysia, and it uses the publications related to this study. Every chapter of this study corresponds to a different study that has the corresponding sections like: 'Introduction', 'Materials and method', 'Results and discussion', and 'Conclusions'. The structure is detailed further in the upcoming paragraphs.

### **Chapter 1**

The problems that motivate the undertaking of this research and the corresponding objectives are specified in this chapter. This chapter also details the scope of this research and work significance.

### Chapter 2

This chapter consists of a detailed review of the literature pertaining to the topics addressed in this thesis. Moreover, there are also clarifications concerning the research gaps identified during the review.

#### **Chapter 3**

This chapter details the methodology employed for the research specifically concerning material preparation, testing process, and data gathering.

## **Chapter 4**

This chapter comprises the first article titled "Integration of Taguchi-Grey Relational Analysis Technique in Parameter Process Optimization for Rice Husk Composite." This article contains the details of the most significant aspect affecting material characteristics and quality for the optimal settings concerning the injection moulding process.

### Chapter 5

This chapter comprises the second article titled "Energy behaviour assessment of rice husk fibres reinforced polymer composite." This article focuses on the analysis of the energy released by the material during different cyclical loading ratios.

### Chapter 6

This chapter comprises the third article titled "Effects of different stress ratios on fatigue crack growth of rice husk fibre-reinforced composite." This article emphasises how stress ratios affect the constants pertaining to the Paris relationship.

### Chapter 7

This chapter comprises the fourth article titled "**Crack Growth Analysis for Rice Husk Reinforced Polypropylene Composite Using Equivalent Initial Flaw Size Concept**." It deals with the method chosen for evaluating the propagation and growth of the fatigue crack. This technique uses fracture mechanics and traditional LEFM. The total fatigue life is ascertained using a mathematical framework that relies on quantitative evaluations.

# Chapter 8

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This chapter comprises the conclusions derived from this study and the recommendations for future research and improvements in this domain.



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