



ISOLATION OF NANOCRYSTALLINE CELLULOSE FROM *Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) de Wit PODS AND ITS APPLICATION AS A FAT REPLACER IN PRODUCTION OF LOW-FAT MAYONNAISE

By

AIDA SAFINA BINTI ARIDI

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

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

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July 2022

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This study investigated the properties of nanocrystalline cellulose (NCC) isolated from *L. leucocephala* mature pods. Four different bleaching agents were used during the bleaching process, followed by sulphuric acid hydrolysis. Physical and chemical properties, crystallinity index, water binding capacity, and thermal behaviour of obtained NCC were determined by using transmission electron microscopy (TEM), Fourier transforms infrared (FTIR), X-ray diffraction (XRD) and thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), respectively. The results showed individual fibres of rod-shaped particles with a nano-sized average diameter (17 to 49 nm) and length (133 to 239 nm) in all NCC produced. The FTIR spectra indicated that the peaks attributed to lignin and hemicellulose were absent after chemical and bleaching treatment and seems that both components were completely removed from the samples after acid hydrolysis. The XRD analysis showed that crystallinity increased after acid hydrolysis, indicating the isolated NCC's crystalline nature for all samples. NCC treated with 7% sodium hypochlorite shows the highest crystallinity that is 71.1% even though cellulose degradation occurs in the bleaching stage. TGA analysis displayed that degradation of NCC occurred at 143 °C, and the T_{max} was at 188 °C with 25.9% residue at 600 °C. A three-region viscosity profile seen in liquid crystalline systems was observed in sonicated samples. Besides that, from Power law, it can be concluded that NCC suspension behaves as a shear-thinning material. Further work was carried out to produce low-fat mayonnaise with isolated NCC as a fat replacer. The mayonnaise with 30% of oil reduction was prepared and incorporated with NCC, MCC, and MCC+NCC (1:1). Both control and mayonnaise with fat replacer appeared stable even after one month of storage. The oil reduction in mayonnaise does affect the colour as all fat-reduced mayonnaise had greater brightness (L^*) than the control sample. Besides that, when fat was replaced by NCC, a^* increased significantly, whereas b^* decreased after storage. All samples showed stable emulsion even after 1 month of storage.

The particle size of oil emulsion for all mayonnaise was within the range of theory, between 200 to 500 nm. The rheological properties of mayonnaise produced showed the shear thinning behaviour. From all obtained results, mayonnaise with NCC as a fat replacer shows the best stability.



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

**PENGASINGAN NANOKRISTAL DARIPADA POD *Leucaena leucocephala*
(Lam.) de Wit DAN PENGGUNAANNYA SEBAGAI PENGGANTI LEMAK
DALAM PENGHASILAN MAYONIS RENDAH LEMAK**

Oleh

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Kajian ini menyiasat sifat selulosa nanohabluran (NCC) yang diasingkan daripada buah matang *L. leucocephala*. Empat agen peluntur yang berbeza telah digunakan semasa proses pelunturan, diikuti oleh hidrolisis asid sulfurik. Sifat fizikal dan kimia, indeks kehabluran, kapasiti mengikat air, dan kelakuan terma NCC yang diperolehi ditentukan dengan menggunakan mikroskop elektron penghantaran (TEM), inframerah transformasi Fourier (FTIR), pembelauan sinar-X (XRD) dan analisis termogravimetrik (TGA), masing-masing. Keputusan menunjukkan gentian individu zarah bentuk rod dengan diameter purata bersaiz nano (17 hingga 49 nm) dan panjang (133 hingga 239 nm) dalam semua NCC yang dihasilkan. Spektrum FTIR menunjukkan bahawa puncak yang dikaitkan dengan lignin dan hemiselulosa tidak hadir selepas rawatan kimia dan pelunturan dan nampaknya kedua-dua komponen telah dikeluarkan sepenuhnya daripada sampel selepas hidrolisis asid. Analisis XRD menunjukkan bahawa kehabluran meningkat selepas hidrolisis asid yang menunjukkan sifat kristal NCC terpercil untuk semua sampel. NCC dirawat dengan 7% natrium hipoklorit menunjukkan kehabluran tertinggi iaitu 71.1% walaupun degradasi selulosa berlaku pada peringkat pelunturan. Analisis TGA menunjukkan bahawa degradasi NCC berlaku pada 143°C, dan Tmax berada pada 188°C dengan 25.9% residu pada 600°C. Profil kelikatan tiga wilayah yang dilihat dalam sistem kristal cecair diperhatikan dalam sampel yang disonikasi. Selain itu, daripada undang-undang Kuasa, boleh disimpulkan bahawa penggantungan NCC berkelakuan sebagai bahan penipisan ricih. Kerja lanjut telah dijalankan untuk menghasilkan mayonis rendah lemak dengan NCC terpercil sebagai pengganti lemak. Mayonis dengan 30% pengurangan minyak telah disediakan dan digabungkan dengan NCC, MCC dan MCC+NCC (1:1). Kedua-dua kawalan dan mayonis dengan penggantian lemak kelihatan stabil walaupun selepas satu bulan disimpan. Pengurangan minyak dalam mayonis memang mempengaruhi warna kerana semua mayonis yang dikurangkan lemak

mempunyai kecerahan (L^*) yang lebih besar daripada sampel kawalan. Selain itu, apabila lemak digantikan oleh NCC, a^* meningkat dengan ketara, manakala b^* menurun selepas penyimpanan. Semua sampel menunjukkan emulsi yang stabil walaupun selepas 1 bulan penyimpanan. Saiz zarah emulsi minyak untuk semua mayonis adalah dalam julat teori, antara 200 hingga 500 nm. Sifat reologi mayonis yang dihasilkan menunjukkan tingkah laku penipisan ricih. Daripada semua keputusan yang diperolehi, mayonis dengan NCC sebagai pengganti lemak menunjukkan kestabilan terbaik



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xx
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives	2
1.4 Research Hypothesis	3
1.5 Scope and Significance of Research	3
1.6 Thesis organization	4
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 <i>Leucaena leucocephala</i>	5
2.1.1 <i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> tree in Malaysia	5
2.1.2 Properties of <i>L. leucocephala</i> tree	8
2.1.3 The Usage of <i>L. leucocephala</i> tree	9
2.2 Cellulose	11
2.3 Nanocellulose	13
2.3.1 Nanocrystalline cellulose (NCC)	13
2.3.2 Nanofibrillated cellulose (NFC)	15
2.4 Isolation of Nanocrystalline Cellulose	16
2.4.1 Pre-Treatment of Cellulosic Materials (Pulping and Bleaching)	16
2.4.2 Acid Hydrolysis	18
2.4.3 Properties of Nanocrystalline Cellulose	20
2.4.4 Application of Nanocrystalline Cellulose in Food	23
2.4.5 Toxicology Analysis of Nanocellulose	25
2.5 Fat replacer	26
2.5.1 Type of Fat Replacer	27
2.5.2 The mechanism for Fat Replacement with Carbohydrates	30
2.5.3 Nanocellulose as a fat replacer	31
2.6 Mayonnaise	33
2.6.1 Composition of Mayonnaise	33
2.6.2 Characteristics of Low-Fat Mayonnaise	34

3	MATERIALS AND METHODS	38
3.1	Materials	38
3.1.1	Preparation of samples	38
3.2	Methods	40
3.2.1	General methodology	40
3.2.2	Production of Cellulose from <i>L. Leucocephala</i> Mature Pods	40
3.2.3	Pre-treatment of <i>L. Leucocephala</i> Mature Pods	41
3.3	Characterization of Mature Pods and Isolated Cellulose	43
3.3.1	Proximate Analysis of Mature Pods	43
3.3.2	Amino Acid Analysis of Mature pods	44
3.3.3	Determination of Chemical Compositions	44
3.3.4	Colour Analysis	45
3.3.5	Functional Group Analysis by Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy	45
3.4	Isolation of Nanocrystalline Cellulose (NCC) by Acid Hydrolysis	46
3.4.1	Alkali and Bleaching treatment	46
3.4.2	Sulfuric Acid Hydrolysis	46
3.5	Characterization studies	48
3.5.1	Functional Group Analysis by Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR)	48
3.5.2	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy (FESEM)	48
3.5.3	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM)	48
3.5.4	Crystal Analysis Using X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	49
3.5.5	Colour analysis	49
3.5.6	Chemical composition analysis	49
3.6	Physical properties and rheological properties of NCC	49
3.6.1	Bulk density	50
3.6.2	Tapped density	50
3.6.3	True density	50
3.6.4	Powder Flow Properties	50
3.6.5	Thermogravimetric analysis	51
3.6.6	Water holding capacity	51
3.6.7	Rheological Analysis	51
3.7	Development of low-fat mayonnaise	52
3.8	Characterization of Low-Fat Mayonnaise	53
3.8.1	Visual Stability and Colour Analysis	53
3.8.2	Emulsion Stability Test	53
3.8.3	Zeta potential and Size of Oil Droplet	54
3.8.4	Rheological Measurement	54

4	ISOLATION OF CELLULOSE AND NANOCRYSTALLINE CELLULOSE FROM <i>LEUCAENA LEUCOCEPHALA</i> MATURE PODS	55
4.1	Introduction	55
4.2	Results and Discussion	55
	4.2.1 Characterization of <i>L. Leucocephala</i> Mature Pods	55
4.3	Characterisation of Isolated Cellulose	57
	4.3.1 Chemical composition of Isolated Cellulose	57
	4.3.2 Colour Analysis	59
	4.3.3 Functional Group Analysis	61
4.4	Characterization of Isolated Nanocrystalline Cellulose	63
	4.4.1 Functional Group Analysis	63
	4.4.2 Morphological analysis	66
	4.4.3 Transmission Electron Microscopy Analysis of <i>L. leucocephala</i> Fibre at Different Stages of Treatment	69
	4.4.4 Crystallinity Analysis	72
	4.4.5 Yield, Colour and Chemical Composition	75
5	PHYSICAL AND RHEOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF NANOCRYSTALLINE CELLULOSE POWDER AND SUSPENSION	77
5.1	Introduction	77
5.2	Results and Discussion	77
	5.2.1 Bulk Density	77
	5.2.2 Tapped Density	78
	5.2.3 True Density	78
	5.2.4 Powder Flow Properties	79
	5.2.5 Water Binding Capacity (WHC)	80
	5.2.6 Thermal stability	81
	5.2.7 Rheology Analysis	83
6	DEVELOPMENT OF LOW-FAT MAYONNAISE WITH THE ADDITION OF NANOCRYSTALLINE CELLULOSE AS A FAT REPLACER	87
6.1	Introduction	87
6.2	Results and Discussion	87
	6.2.1 Visual Stability and Colour Analysis	87
	6.2.2 Emulsion Stability	90
	6.2.3 Zeta Potential and Particle Size Analysis	92
	6.2.4 Rheological Analysis	94
7	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	98
7.1	Conclusion	98
7.2	Recommendations for Future Work	99

REFERENCES	100
APPENDICES	120
BIODATA OF STUDENT	127
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	128



LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	Stem yield according to species, age and tree density.	7
2.2	Nutrient composition of leaves and seeds of <i>L. leucocephala</i> (% dry matter basis)	8
2.3	Proximate compositions, tannin and mimosine content in different parts of <i>L. leucocephala</i>	9
2.4	Example of usage of <i>L. leucocephala</i> tree	10
2.5	Example of the source for isolation of nanocrystalline cellulose and its dimensions	14
2.6	Comparison between the different types of nanocellulose	15
2.7	Available process of extraction approaches from different sources for NCC isolation	19
2.8	Crystallinity index (Crl) of different sources for the isolation of nanocrystalline cellulose	22
2.9	The chemical composition of different sources of nanocrystalline cellulose	23
2.10	Examples of carbohydrate-based fat replacers and their functionalities	28
3.1	List of chemicals used in the study	38
3.2	Formulation for the development of low-fat mayonnaise	53
4.1	Amino acid compositions of mature pod <i>L. leucocephala</i>	57
4.2	Chemical compositions of <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibre at different stages of treatment	59
4.3	Whiteness index (%) of obtained cellulose treated with different bleaching agents	60
4.4	Lengths, diameters, and aspect ratios of the obtained nanocrystalline cellulose	71
4.5	Crystallinity indices (Crl) and crystallite size of all samples	74

4.6	Yield percentages and whiteness indices of nanocrystalline cellulose at different percentages of NaClO	75
4.7	Chemical composition of raw <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibre and treated fibre	76
5.1	Material properties of nanocrystalline cellulose (3%, 5%, and 7% treated with sodium hypochlorite). The obtained value was then compared to commercial cellulose	80
5.2	Water holding capacity (WHC) of cellulose and nanocellulose from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pod	81
5.3	Thermal properties of NCC isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pod	82
5.4	Calculated Power law parameters for aqueous unsonicated nanocrystalline cellulose solutions of different concentrations	86
5.5	Calculated Power law parameters for aqueous sonicated nanocrystalline cellulose solutions of different concentrations	86
6.1	Colour analysis and whiteness index of all four mayonnaise at different storage times	90
6.2	Zeta potential and size of oil emulsion of all four mayonnaise samples at the different days of storage	94
6.3	Calculated Power law for all mayonnaise samples on day 1, day 7, and day 30	95

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.1 (a) <i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> tree (b) Mature pod	5
2.2 Ten most common species with the recorded allometric equations in South East Asia	7
2.3 Plant cell walls. (A) Model of the primary cell wall. (B) Model of the secondary cell wall, deposited between the primary cell wall and the plasma membrane. It contains relatively long and thick cellulose microfibrils, hemicellulose xylan and lignin. (C) Cross section of an Arabidopsis inflorescence stem	12
2.4 Scheme of interaction between cellulose molecular chains within the crystalline region of cellulose microfibrils	12
2.5 Isolation process of nanocrystalline cellulose from cellulosic source	16
2.6 Schematic representation of sulfuric hydrolysis of cellulose fibres. CNC is also known as nanocrystalline cellulose	20
2.7 Example of application of NCC in the food industry	24
2.8 Schematics showing the functionalities of various carbohydrate fat replacers in different food systems	31
2.9 Process flow diagram for production of mayonnaise	33
2.10 Some of the critical properties of mayonnaise must be fulfilled to produce a stable product	35
3.1 Preparation of samples	39
3.2 Flowchart study of cellulose production from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pods	42
3.3 Flowchart of isolation and characterization of nanocrystalline cellulose. NaClO is sodium hypochlorite which is used as the bleaching agent	47
3.4 The flowchart of rheological analysis of nanocrystalline cellulose	52
4.1 The percentage of carbohydrate, total fat, total protein, moisture and ash in <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pods	56

4.2	Images of cellulose obtained from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pods using different bleaching agents.	61
4.3	Fourier transform infrared spectrum of all cellulose samples treated with different bleaching agents	62
4.4	Fourier transform infrared spectrum of cellulose samples treated with sodium hypochlorite at different percentage	65
4.5	Fourier transform infrared spectrum of nanocrystalline cellulose isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pod using different percentages of sodium hypochlorite (NaClO)	66
4.6	(a) Untreated mature <i>L. leucocephala</i> pod fibre; (b) Alkali-treated mature <i>L. leucocephala</i> pod fibre; (c) FESEM analysis of untreated mature <i>L. leucocephala</i> pod powder; and (d) FESEM analysis of alkali-treated mature <i>L. leucocephala</i> pod fibre	68
4.7	Image of nanocrystalline cellulose isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibres using different sodium hypochlorite (NaClO) percentages: (a) Image of NCC treated with 3% NaClO, (b) Image of NCC treated with 5% NaClO, (c) Image of NCC treated with 7% NaClO, (d) FESEM image of 3% NCC at 50k Magnification, (e) FESEM image of 5% NCC at 50k magnification, and (f) FESEM image of 7% NCC at 50k magnification	69
4.8	TEM images of NCC treated with (a) 3%, (d) 5%, and (g) 7% of NaClO; length histograms of NCC treated with (b) 3%, (e) 5%, and (h) 7% of NaClO; and diameter histograms of NCC treated with (c) 3%, (f) 5%, and (i) 7% of NaClO	71
4.9	X-ray diffractogram of untreated fibre, alkali-treated fibre 3% NCC isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibre, 5% NCC isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibre, and 7% NCC isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> fibre	74
5.1	Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) and DTG graphs of NCC isolated from <i>L. leucocephala</i> mature pod	82
5.2	Shear rate against viscosity of unsonicated nanocrystalline cellulose suspension	85
5.3	Shear rate against viscosity of sonicated nanocrystalline cellulose suspension	85
6.1	Images of mayonnaise samples (a) after one day of preparation, (b) after seven days of preparation; and (c) after 30 days of preparation. Bottle A is the control sample. Bottle B is	

	mayonnaise with MCC, bottle C is the mayonnaise with MCC+NCC, and bottle D is the mayonnaise with NCC	89
6.2	Emulsion stability of all four mayonnaise samples at day 1, day 7, and day 30 of storage. Full-fat is the control sample	91
6.3	Shear rate against viscosity of all samples at different preparation days; (a) viscosity after 1-day preparation, (b) after 7-days preparation, and (c) after 1-month preparation	97



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix		Page
A	The structure of questionnaires	120
B	Data on respondent's background	120
C	The weight status of respondents based on the calculation of body mass index (BMI)	120
D	Data obtained from the survey	121
E	Malaysian consumer perception of low-fat mayonnaise	126

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

α	Alpha
β	Beta
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	Degree Celsius
%	Percentage
MCC	Microcrystalline cellulose
NCC	Nanocrystalline cellulose
NFC	Nanofibrillated cellulose
DPPH	2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl
ABTS	2,2'-azino-bis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid)
FRAP	Fluorescence recovery after photobleaching
TEMPO	2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidine-1-oxyl radical
FTIR	Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy
XRD	X-ray diffraction
TEM	Transmission electron microscopes
FESEM	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent decades, enormous efforts have been made to improve new materials and replace broadly used petroleum-based products using renewable biomass feedstock. Biocompatible composites and biodegradable plastics produced from bio-renewable resources could replace petrochemical-based polymers, reducing global dependence on non-renewable sources. These biomass feedstocks are of great interest due to the possibility of nontoxicity, renewability, biodegradability, and sustainability (Amini et al. 2017; Ilyas et al. 2019).

Malaysia is one of the richest countries in biodiversity and has a high potential for biomass crop diversification. Some underutilized biomass species are yet to be discovered, which can be planted to provide a sustainable energy source and biomaterials. *Leucaena leucocephala* (*L. leucocephala*) is being considered one of the potential forest plantation plants by the Malaysian Timber Industrial Board (MITB). It is locally known as “*petai belalang*” and has amazed thousands of people for its high-density wood yields (Wan Mohd Nazri et al. 2011), fast growth (Wan Mohd Nazri et al. 2009) and strong adaptability (Rasat et al. 2016).

The Malaysia Agricultural Research Development Institute (MARDI) has used this multipurpose tree for shade and wind protection in various crops, especially during early growth and food for some animals. The trees are typically felled, burnt, or left to decay when the plantation crops mature (Adnan 2012). It has motivated researchers to turn these bio-fibres into valuable sustainability products. One solution to the problem of *L. leucocephala* being left to rot is converting them into value-added products such as nanomaterials. This nanomaterial can be isolated from cellulosic plants by chemical, mechanical or enzymatic processes.

The study reported that the use of *L. leucocephala* mature pod as raw materials to produce nanocrystalline cellulose is limited. The motivation is to convert this biomass into cellulose, particularly nanocrystalline cellulose, owing to its cellulosic nature and as carbohydrates, reserve drive to this study to be conducted. Husin et al. (2017) have reported using other parts of the *L. leucocephala* tree, particularly the seeds, to isolate the cellulose from this biomass waste. However, studies on the isolation of nanocrystalline cellulose from different parts of the plant, especially the mature pods, have not yet been reported. Therefore, this study is done to provide data on the first nanocrystalline cellulose isolated from the mature pods of *L. leucocephala*.

For the value-added utilization of nanocrystalline cellulose from *L. leucocephala*, the nanocrystalline cellulose obtained has been used as a fat-replacer in the development of low-fat mayonnaise. The selected isolated and characterized nanocrystalline cellulose were later incorporated into the mayonnaise formulation, and its physical and chemical stability was investigated for one month.

1.2 Problem Statement

Owing to the annual availability of the *L. leucocephala* biomass, particularly the mature pods and the continuous supply of the waste as resources, the utilization of the mature pods into a value-added product is gaining much attention from researchers. The goals are to use the waste resources contributing to environmental pollution to produce valuable products. Therefore, the isolation of nanocrystalline cellulose (NCC) from *L. leucocephala* mature pods has been proposed to widen the utilization of the *L. leucocephala* tree.

Many research has been focused on investigating the parameters involved during acid hydrolysis. Still, little study has explored how pre-treatment, especially bleaching, can affect the NCC obtained. The bleaching step is critical to cellulose quality because it not only acts as an unwanted colour remover but is also capable of degrading non-cellulose compounds. Therefore, in this study, four different bleaching agents (sodium chlorite, sodium hypochlorite, potassium permanganate, and oxalic acid) have been used to investigate the suitable bleaching agents in the purification of cellulose fibres. Then, the best percentage of sodium hypochlorite (3%, 5% and 7%) used during the pre-treatment is also evaluated to obtain the best nanocrystalline cellulose. Sulfuric acid hydrolysis is used to obtain nanocrystalline cellulose as it will produce NCC particles with anionic sulphur groups on the surface, leading to an electrostatically stabilized NCC aqueous suspension. The NCC obtained will be comparable for their properties in terms of yield, thermal stability and crystallinity.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to isolate NCC from *L. leucocephala* mature pods and to investigate the suitability of this NCC to be used as a fat-replacer as an alternative to a commercial fat replacer available in the market. To achieve the aim, several objectives were set, as listed below:

- i. To investigate how different bleaching agents will affect the isolation of cellulose and nanocrystalline cellulose (NCC) and how different percentage of sodium hypochlorite affect the properties of NCC obtained.
- ii. To evaluate the physical and rheological properties of isolated NCC.

- iii. To evaluate the isolated NCC as a fat-replacer in the production of low-fat mayonnaise

1.4 Research Hypothesis

To address the objectives, several hypotheses were stated as follows:

- i. Due to the difference in chemical composition between *L. leucocephala* mature pods and wood pulp, it is reasonable to assume that the optimal bleaching conditions for the pods are different from those used for wood pulps. Thus, it is critical to investigate how bleaching agents and conditions affect yield quality.
- i. Pre-treatment (delignification) process using the right bleaching agent produced a higher yield and purified cellulose. Besides that, if the right combination for acid hydrolysis of *L. leucocephala* mature pods with sulfuric acid, NCC produced should be purified, has a high aspect ratio and crystallinity index.
- ii. When the purified NCC is obtained using the correct percentage of sodium hypochlorite during pre-treatment, it can be applied as a fat-replacer in low-fat mayonnaise. This is because a purified NCC can adsorb to air–water or oil-water interfaces and stabilize foams or emulsions, self-assemble in aqueous solutions to form gel networks and act as fillers or fat replacers.

1.5 Scope and Significance of Research

The novelty of the research lies in the contribution of the research data findings dealing with *L. leucocephala* and nanocrystalline cellulose. This plant is mainly burnt or left to decay, contributing to waste management problems. Therefore, researchers tend to find a solution for converting biomass into something valuable and contributing to the growth of Malaysia's economy. *L. leucocephala* is widely used in Malaysia as livestock forage, reforestation material, furniture, and construction timber. Recently, a study on cellulose-based isolation, particularly in nanocellulose fibres, gained much attention. To the best of our knowledge, isolating nanocrystalline cellulose from *L. leucocephala* mature pods has not been reported yet. Thus, this is a pioneer work to provide the data on nanocrystalline cellulose isolated from this plant, and we can claim that our research is the first to study the isolation and characterization of nanocrystalline cellulose from *L. leucocephala* mature pods.

Understanding different factors that affect the response of mayonnaise properties is vital in producing good quality NCC using sulfuric acid hydrolysis. This study uses three different percentages of sodium hypochlorite during pre-treatment. The best quality of NCC is used as a fat-replacer to replace oil in low-

fat mayonnaise. Such knowledge is also valuable for producing stable low-fat mayonnaise and provides an application for the isolated NCC.

1.6 Thesis organization

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the background study, problem statement, objectives, novelty and the hypothesis of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of published literature relating to this subject. The literature review guided the reader to understand the study's design, methods, analysis and expected trends.

Chapter 3 covered the information on the materials and chemicals that were used during the study. It also describes the experimental methods, from the preparation of samples to producing nanocrystalline cellulose. It also entails various analyses to characterise the samples, including FTIR, FESEM, TEM, XRD, TGA, and other chemical composition analyses.

In chapter 4, the properties of nanocrystalline cellulose isolated from *L. leucocephala* mature pods are discussed in detail. The physical and rheological properties of NCC suspension are discussed in chapter 5. In chapter 6, an attempt was carried out to use isolated NCC as a fat-replacer in the development of low-fat mayonnaise. The physical stability of the mayonnaise produced is evaluated for one month.

Finally, chapter 7 summarizes the conclusion of all findings from this study. Also, recommendations and suggested future works were mentioned in this chapter.

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