



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***FEEDING HABITS OF LONG-SPINED BLACK SEA URCHIN,  
DIADEMA SETOSUM FROM PANGKOR ISLAND, PENINSULAR  
MALAYSIA***

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Bachelor of Agriculture (Aquaculture)

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## ABSTRACT

The tropical sea urchin, *Diadema setosum* is considered as a commercially important Echinoid nowadays due to its nutritional and pharmaceutical values. In the present study, feeding habits and range of food items consumed by *D. setosum* were investigated through the examination of gut content of 60 live urchins. Sea urchin samples were collected from the intertidal reefs of Pangkor Island, Peninsular Malaysia during January-May, 2011. The diet compositions of *D. setosum* were grouped into 10 categories including algae, sea urchin spines, plant-like matters, juvenile of sea cucumber, juvenile of sea urchin, gastropod, crustacean appendages, coral fragments, debris and unidentified items. Majority of the gut was filled up with food. Analysis on the percentage of numerical of occurrence ( $C_i$ ) showed that the highest value was algae (66.94%), while coral fragments (18.78%) were the second highest followed by plant-like matter (4.75%), sea urchin spines (4.47%), debris (1.68%), unidentified items (1.3%), juvenile of sea cucumber (0.39%), crustacean appendages (0.23%), and the least was juvenile of sea urchin (0.16%). Besides this, percentage frequency of occurrence ( $F_i$ ) values for algae, sea urchin spines, plant-like matters, juvenile of sea cucumber and juvenile of sea urchin, gastropod, crustacean appendages, coral fragments, debris and unidentified items were 34.11, 12.99, 7.91, 1.97, 0.77, 5.17, 0.65, 23.46, 7.39, and 5.58%, respectively. The results obtained from the present study indicate that *D. setosum* is an omnivorous marine invertebrate as it consumes a variety of food items associated with their natural habitat.

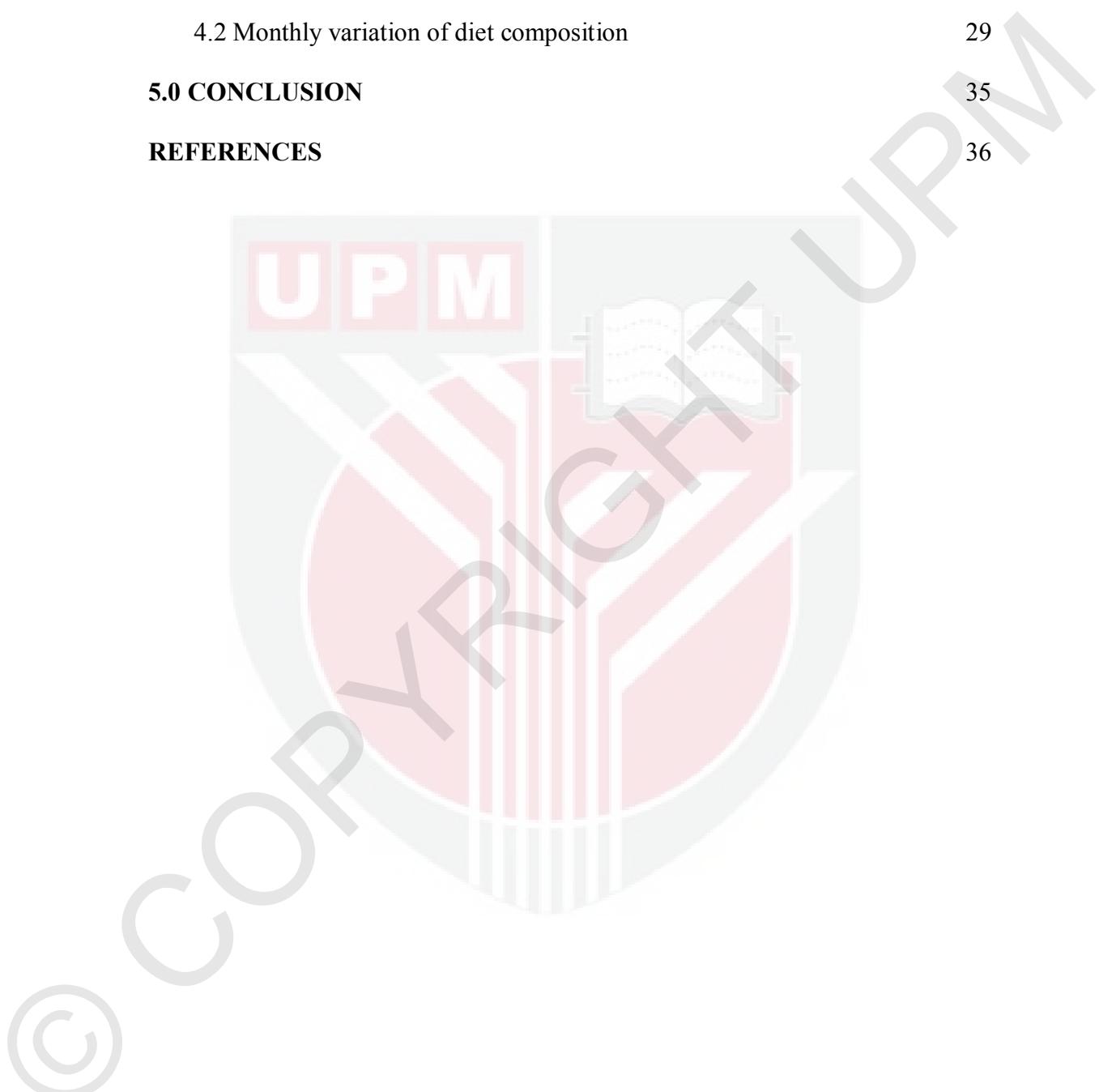
## ABSTRAK

Landak laut tropika, *Diadema setosum* dianggap sebagai Echinoid yang mempunyai nilai komersial pada masa kini di sebabkan oleh nilai nutrisi dan farmaseutikal. Dalam kajian terkini, penyelidikan terhadap tabiat pemakanan dan julat makanan yang di makan oleh *D. setosum* telah dijalankan ke atas kandungan perut bagi 60 ekor sampel landak laut hidup. Sampel landak laut telah di ambil di kawasan karang sekitar Pulau Pangkor, Semenanjung Malaysia pada bulan Januari sehingga Mei 2011. Komposisi diet *Diadema setosum* telah dikategorikan kepada 10 kumpulan yang mana termasuk alga, duri landak laut, tumbuhan, peringkat juvenil timun laut dan peringkat juvenil landak laut, siput, anggota badan krustasia, serpihan karang, kotoran dan item yang tidak dikenalpasti. Keseluruhan perut dipenuhi dengan makanan. Analisis ke atas peratusan yang di makan ( $C_i$ ) menunjukkan nilai yang paling tinggi adalah alga (66.94%) dan serpihan karang (18.78%) merupakan yang ke dua tertinggi diikuti dengan tumbuhan (4.75%), duri landak laut (4.47%), kotoran (1.68%), item yang tidak dikenalpasti (1.3%), juvenil timun laut (0.39%), anggota badan krustasia (0.23%), dan yang terakhir adalah juvenil landak laut (0.16%). Selain itu, nilai peratusan kekerapan makan ( $F_i$ ) untuk alga, duri landak laut, tumbuhan, peringkat juvenil timun laut dan peringkat juvenil landak laut, siput, anggota badan krustasia, serpihan karang, kotoran dan item yang tidak dikenalpasti adalah 34.11, 12.99, 7.91, 1.97, 0.77, 5.17, 0.65, 23.46, 7.39, dan 5.58% untuk setiap satu makanan. Keputusan yang diperolehi melalui kajian terkini menunjukkan bahawa *D. setosum* berkemungkinan adalah invertebrat laut omnivor kerana sifatnya yang memakan pelbagai jenis makanan yang terdapat di sekitar habitat semulajadinya.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Sea urchins from the class Echinoidea are mainly omnivorous marine invertebrates that feed on both plants and animals. They usually feed on detritus, ingesting substrate and scraping algal films off hard substratum (Pearse, 1970) along with the decomposing matter. There are six species of *Diadema* (Gray, 1825).

*Diadema setosum* (Leske, 1778) belonging to the family Diadematidae is one of the regular echinoids widely distributed in the Indo-West Pacific Ocean, where it occurs from the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez, Gulf of Aqaba, northern and southern Red Sea), and the east coast of Africa, to Japan and Australia (Lessios *et al.*, 2001; Rahman *et al.*, 2012). This species lives mainly near to the reefs and encrusting coral rocks. It is an unselective omnivore that go from place to place for searching food usually at night (James and Pearse, 1969). When *D. setosum* established in coastal waters it might cause harm to diverse. Moreover, this species can accumulate in colonies with large quantities, causing bioerosion to its surrounding habitat and compete with native species (Mokady *et al.*, 1996). The classification of *D. setosum* was identified using the description given by (Coppard and Campbell, 2006).

The sea urchin aquaculture industry is mainly based on the production of marketable gonads (Roe or Uni) that are considered as a priced delicacy and valuable seafood product in Asian and European markets (Buitrago *et al.*, 2005).

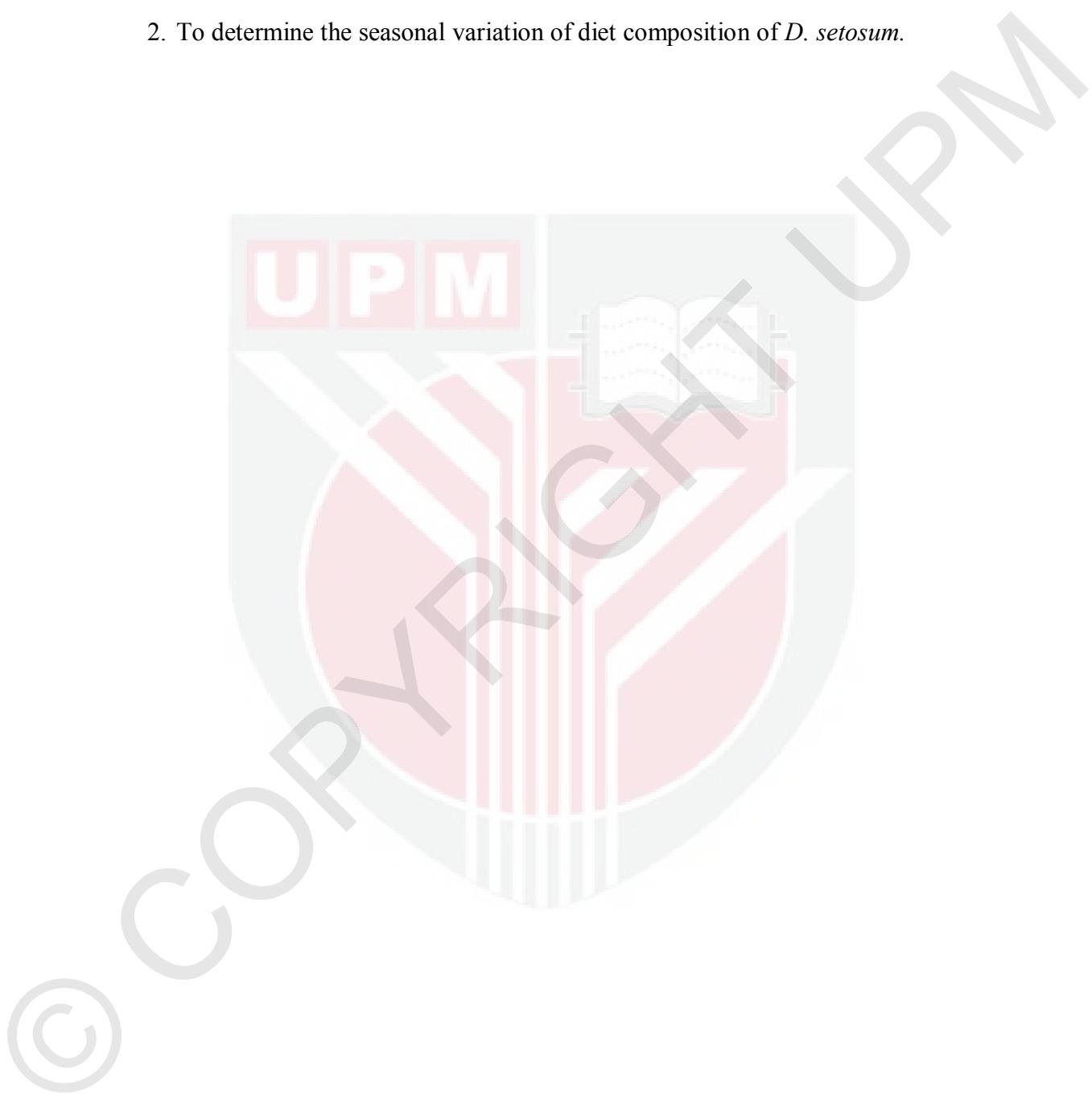
Aquaculture of sea urchin requires an understanding on the quality and quantity of algal and prepared food for the gonad production. The extreme gonad colour depends upon the level of echinenone, which directly influence the market value (George *et al.*, 2001).

The study of nutrition had been done in many aspects including feed type (Fernandez and Boudouresque, 1997) and comparison between different algal diets (Frantzis and Gremare, 1992). Feeding ecology of urchin species had been done through gut content analysis or direct observation (Mortensen, 1943).

Until now, a very few studies have been conducted on the feeding ecology of *D. setosum*. Abbott *et al.* (1974) studied the feeding behavior of *D. setosum* and found that both drift plants and attach algae were its major foods. Sea urchin research is quite new in Malaysia. However, very few systematic works have been done on the population characteristic and distribution patterns of *D. setosum* in peninsular Malaysia (Kee Alfian, 2003; Wei *et al.*, 2008; Rahman *et al.*, 2012) but no published information on their feeding ecology are available. The present works has therefore been undertaken to investigate the biological and ecological aspects of food and feeding habits of *D. setosum*, which would add basic information on the species especially to those who want to culture it.

Hence the specific objectives of the present study are:

1. To investigate the stomach contents of *Diadema setosum*.
2. To determine the seasonal variation of diet composition of *D. setosum*.



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