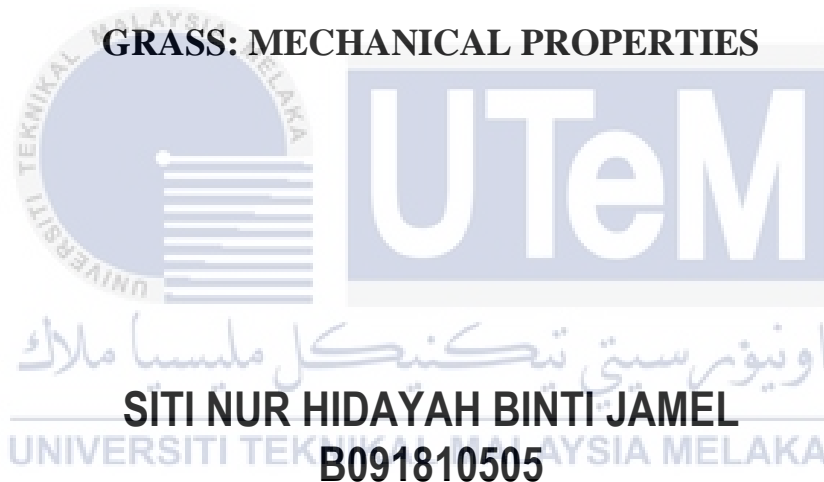




## **BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING DERIVED FROM NAPIER**



## **BACHELOR OF MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY WITH HONOURS**

**2022**



**Faculty of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering  
Technology**



**BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING DERIVED FROM NAPIER  
GRASS: MECHANICAL PROPERTIES**

**Siti Nur Hidayah Binti Jamel**

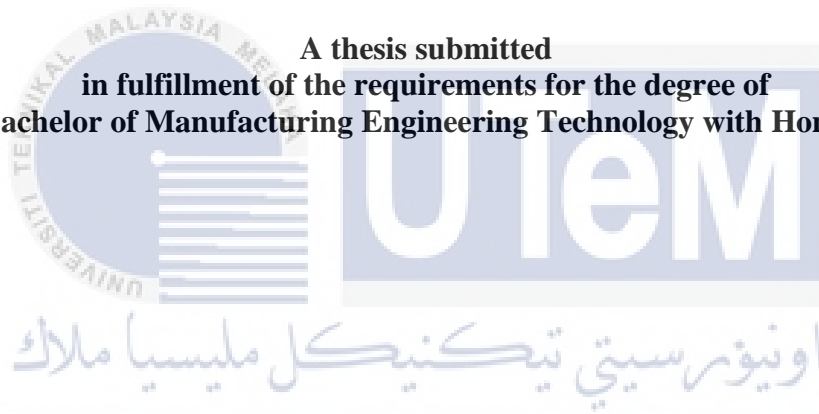
**Bachelor of Manufacturing Engineering Technology with Honors**

**2022**

**BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING DERIVED FROM NAPIER GRASS:  
MECHANICAL PROPERTIES**

**SITI NUR HIDAYAH BINTI JAMEL**

**A thesis submitted  
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Manufacturing Engineering Technology with Honors**



**Faculty of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering Technology**

**UNIVERSITI TEKNIKAL MALAYSIA MELAKA**

**2022**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “Biodegradable Packaging Derived from Napier Grass: Mechanical Properties” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature

:



Name

:

SITI NURHIDAYAH BINTI JAMEL

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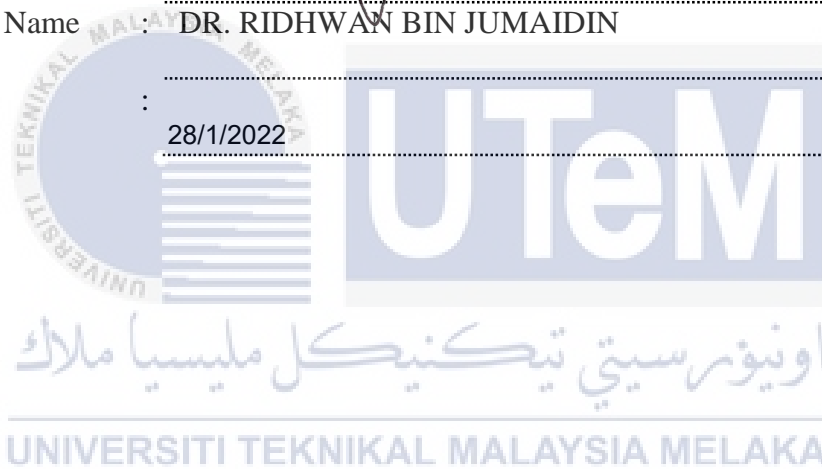
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## APPROVAL

I hereby declare that I have checked this thesis and, in my opinion, this thesis is adequate in terms of scope and quality for the award of the Bachelor of Manufacturing Engineering Technology with Honors.

Signature :   
Supervisor Name : DR. RIDHWAN BIN JUMAIDIN  
Date : 28/1/2022



## DEDICATION

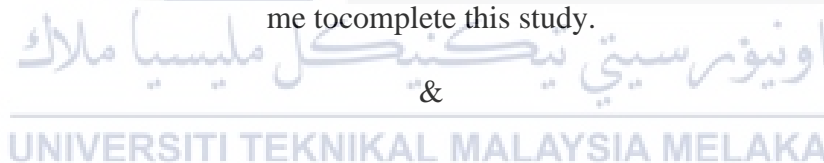
To Al-Quran, the greatest source of knowledge

*Bring me sheets of iron" - until, when he had leveled [them] between the two mountain walls, he said, "Blow [with bellows]," until when he had made it [like] fire, he said, "Bring me, that I may pour over its molten copper."*

(Al-Kahf: Verse 96)

Alhamdulillah

Praise to Allah for the strength, guidance and knowledge that was given by Allah for me to complete this study.



To my beloved parents have been the strength for me and continuously support and sacrifice throughout my study &

To my supervisor, Dr. Ridhwan bin Jumaidin for his guidance and advice in completing this research.

&

To all the individual(s) who had provided me the assistance, support and inspiration to embark on my study.

## ABSTRACT

Biodegradable material has been a significant challenge. The present problem of excessive napier grass production has resulted in waste, as only a portion of napier grass is used for certain purposes. This is one of the reasons for the study's use of napier grass fiber (NGF). Among other biodegradable materials, thermoplastic cassava starch (TPCS) has been identified as a fully biodegradable substance that can be generated by a variety of plants and is one of the most abundant renewable, biodegradable, and cost-effective resources accessible. The purpose of this study is to develop biodegradable TPCS reinforced with beeswax and NGF as well as to investigate the thermal analysis, mechanical properties, and physical properties of the materials. TPCS, on the other hand, have several limitations, including poor mechanical characteristics. A novel material composed of TPCS reinforced with beeswax and NGF has been made. To strengthen the cassava starch biopolymer's shortcomings, beeswax and NGF were incorporated at different loadings i.e., 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, and 50% fiber content. The mixture was blended uniformly and the samples were formed using hot-compression molding. The essential features of TPCS/NGF biopolymer composites were then evaluated to determine their suitability as biodegradable reinforcements. The finding shows that the tensile and flexural properties exhibit the same pattern of increasing strength and modulus, however, elongation exhibits a decreasing tendency. In terms of thermal properties, it was discovered that increasing the percentage of NGF in the TPCS matrix from 0% to 50% increased the thermal stability of the composites due to the fibers' hydrophobic qualities. The FTIR analysis demonstrates the presence of chemical bonding in the samples, whilst the SEM micrograph of the tensile fracture surface demonstrates the composite's microstructure changing as the fiber content increases. As a conclusion, the study presented preliminary data on the of TPCS/NGF composites, particularly in packaging. As a result, this material can eventually be the alternative for the non-biodegradable bioplastic, allowing natural waste to be fully used.

## ***ABSTRAK***

Bahan terbiodegradasi telah menjadi satu cabaran yang besar. Masalah pengeluaran rumput napier yang berlebihan sekarang telah mengakibatkan pembaziran, kerana hanya sebahagian rumput napier digunakan untuk tujuan tertentu. Ini adalah salah satu sebab kajian menggunakan serat rumput napier (NGF). Antara bahan terbiodegradasi lain, termoplastik kanji ubi kayu (TPCS) telah dikenal pasti sebagai bahan terbiodegradasi sepenuhnya yang boleh dijana oleh pelbagai tumbuhan dan merupakan salah satu sumber boleh diperbaharui, terbiodegradasi dan kos efektif yang paling banyak boleh diakses. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membangunkan TPCS terbiodegradasi yang diperkuatkan dengan lilin lebah dan NGF serta untuk menyiasat analisis haba, sifat mekanikal, dan sifat fizikal bahan tersebut. TPCS, sebaliknya, mempunyai beberapa batasan, termasuklah seperti ciri mekanikal yang lemah. Bahan baru yang terdiri daripada TPCS yang diperkuat dengan lilin lebah dan NGF telah dibuat. Untuk mengukuhkan kekurangan biopolimer kanji ubi kayu, lilin lebah dan NGF telah digabungkan pada muatan yang berbeza iaitu, 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, dan 50% kandungan serat. Campuran diadun secara seragam dan sampel dibentuk menggunakan acuan mampatan panas. Ciri-ciri penting komposit biopolimer TPCS/NGF kemudiannya dinilai untuk menentukan kesesuaiannya sebagai bahan biodegradasi yang kukuh. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa sifat tegangan dan lentur mempamerkan corak peningkatan kekuatan dan modulus yang sama, namun, pemanjangan menunjukkan kecenderungan menurun. Dari segi sifat terma, didapati bahawa meningkatkan peratusan NGF dalam matriks TPCS daripada 0% kepada 50% menaikkan kestabilan terma komposit disebabkan oleh kualiti hidrofobik gentian. Analisis FTIR menunjukkan kehadiran ikatan kimia dalam sampel, manakala mikroskop SEM bagi permukaan patah tegangan menunjukkan perubahan struktur mikro komposit apabila kandungan gentian meningkat. Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian membentangkan data awal tentang komposit TPCS/NGF, terutamanya dalam pembungkusan. Akibatnya, bahan ini akhirnya boleh menjadi alternatif untuk bioplastik tidak terbiodegradasi, membolehkan sisa semula jadi digunakan sepenuhnya.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	
<b>APPROVAL</b>	
<b>DEDICATION</b>	
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Objective of Study	5
1.4 Significance of Study	5
1.5 Scope of Study	6
1.6 Structure of Thesis	7
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Classification of Polymer	10
2.2.1 Synthetic Polymer	11
2.2.2 Bio Polymer	15
2.3 Composite	18
2.3.1 Polymer Matrix Composite (PMC)	18
2.3.2 Applications of Composite	20
2.4 Napier Grass	21
2.4.1 Natural Fiber	21
2.4.2 Microstructure of Fiber	23
2.4.3 Napier Grass (Pennisetum Purpureum)	23
2.4.4 Napier Grass (Stem) Fiber	25
2.4.5 Fiber Materials	26
2.4.6 Characteristics of Napier Grass Fiber	27
2.4.7 Application of Napier Grass Fiber	28
2.5 Napier Grass Composite	29

2.6	Starch	31
2.6.1	Type of Starch	33
2.6.2	Application of Starch	35
2.7	Thermoplastic Starch	36
2.7.1	Polymerization on Starch	39
2.7.2	Thermoplastic Potato Starch	41
2.7.3	Thermoplastic Cassava Starch	44
2.7.4	Application of Thermoplastic Starch	45
2.8	Thermoplastic Starch Composite	47
2.9	Waxes	48
2.9.1	Synthetic Waxes	50
2.9.2	Natural Waxes	50
2.9.3	Beeswax	51
2.9.4	Application of Waxes	52
2.10	Plasticizer	53
2.10.1	Glycerol	54
2.10.2	Sorbitol	56
2.11	Packaging	58
2.11.1	Polypropylene	58
2.11.2	Polystyrene	60
2.12	Summary	62
<b>CHAPTER 3                    METHODOLOGY</b>		<b>63</b>
3.1	Introduction	63
3.2	Material	65
3.2.1	Napier Grass Stem Fiber	65
3.2.2	Cassava Starch	66
3.2.3	Glycerol	67
3.2.4	Beeswax	68
3.3	Fabrication of Samples	69
3.3.1	Fabrication of Thermoplastic Cassava Starch	69
3.3.2	Fabrication of Thermoplastic Cassava Starch with Beeswax	71
3.3.3	Fabrication of TPCS Reinforced by Napier Grass Stem Fiber	72
3.4	Sample Testing	74
3.4.1	Thermal Testing	74
3.4.2	Mechanical Testing	75
3.4.3	Physical Properties	76
<b>CHAPTER 4                    RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS</b>		<b>79</b>
4.1	Introduction	79
4.2	Hypothesis of Study	79
4.2.1	Thermal Analysis	79
4.2.2	Mechanical Analysis	82
4.2.3	Physical Properties	88
<b>CHAPTER 5                    CONCLUSION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>		<b>96</b>
5.1	Conclusion	96
5.2	Recommendation for Future Research	98

5.3	Potential Product	98
5.4	Lifelong Learning	101
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>103</b>	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>117</b>	



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Table 2.1	Difference Between Thermosets and Thermoplastics	15
Table 2.2	Natural fiber composites have a variety of applications depending on their characteristics	21
Table 2.3	Chemical, physical and mechanical properties for Napier grass	27
Table 2.4	Napier grass fiber comparison properties with other perennial grasses	27
Table 2.5	Different sources of starch and their reactions towards amylose/amylopectin	34
Table 2.6	Some of native starches crystallinity	43
Table 2.7	Mechanical analysis results of stress-strain	43
Table 2.8	Specification and application of glycerol	56
Table 2.9	Plasticized cassava starch film with varying ratios of glycerol and sorbitol	57
Table 2.10	Advantages and disadvantages of petrochemical thermoplastics resins	59
Table 2.11	Polystyrene applications	61
Table 3.1	QReC Chemical of Glycerol Chemical Composition	67
Table 3.2	The calculation for fiber preparation with different ration percentage of the mixture	73
Table 4.1	Summary of the analysis variance (ANOVA) of Tensile analysis NGF composites	83
Table 4.2	Summary of the analysis variance (ANOVA) of Flexural analysis NGF composites	86
Table 5.1	Total Cost of Raw Material for One Tray	99

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 2.1	Classification of Polymer.	11
Figure 2.2	Molecular Structure of Thermoset	13
Figure 2.3	Molecular Structure of Thermoplastics	14
Figure 2.4	Structural difference between Thermoplastics and Thermosets.	15
Figure 2.5	Classification of polymeric matrices for natural fiber composites.	23
Figure 2.6	(a) Napier grass structure, (b) Anatomy of grass parts, (c) Inflorescence, (d) Seed Unit	25
Figure 2.7	Photographs of (a) Napier grass and (b) extracted grass fibers	26
Figure 2.8	Scanning electron micrographs of the cross section of Napier grass fibers	26
Figure 2.9	Napier grass electron scanning	27
Figure 2.10	Treated Napier grass surface using SEM	31
Figure 2.11	The micrographs of corn starch	34
Figure 2.12	Thermoplastic starch mechanical properties	39
Figure 2.13	Starch graft polymerization mechanisms	41
Figure 2.14	Amylopectin and Amylose microstructure.	42
Figure 2.15	Potato starch X-ray spectra using Savitzky-Golay smoothing algorithm.	42
Figure 2.16	Pattern of cassava starch with different ratio of glycerol and sorbitol.	57
Figure 2.17	Scanning thermogram of cassava starch films plasticized with different ratio of glycerol and sorbitol.	58
Figure 2.18	Polypropylene micro structure.	59

Figure 2.19 Chemical bonding styrene (vinyl benzene) monomer for styrene polymer chain	61
Figure 3.1 The Methodology Study Flow	65
Figure 3.2 Napier grass features and structures.	65
Figure 3.3 Napier Grass Fiber Extraction Processes	66
Figure 3.4 Cassava Starch	67
Figure 3.5 Glycerol contained 99.5% AR grade	68
Figure 3.6 Beeswax	68
Figure 3.7 Preparation of TPCS mixture	70
Figure 3.8 Fabrication of TPCS mixture	70
Figure 3.9 Preparation of TPCS mixture	72
Figure 3.10 Fabrication of TPCS mixture reinforced with napier grass fiber	74
Figure 3.11 TGA machine	75
Figure 3.12 The methodology for Tensile Properties	75
Figure 3.13 The methodology for Flexural properties	76
Figure 3.14 FTIR Spectroscopy machine	77
Figure 3.15 The Methodology for FTIR	77
Figure 3.16 Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) Machine	78
Figure 3.17 The Methodology for SEM	78
Figure 4.1 Percentage of Thermogravimetric Analysis (TGA) of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	81
Figure 4.2 Percentage of Derivative Thermogravimetric (DTG) of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	81

Figure 4.3 Percentage of Tensile Strength of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	84
Figure 4.4 Percentage of Tensile Strain of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	84
Figure 4.5 Percentage of Tensile Modulus of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	85
Figure 4.6 Percentage of Flexural Strength of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	87
Figure 4.7 Percentage of Flexural Strain of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	87
Figure 4.8 Percentage of Flexural Modulus of TPCS/Napier grass fiber with different fiber loading	88
Figure 4.9 FT-IR spectra of TPCS reinforced by NGF composites with different fiber loading	90
Figure 4.10 SEM micrograph of Napier Grass Fiber	92
Figure 4.11 Scanning electron micrograph of TPCS reinforced by NGF composites (a) 0% fiber content, (b) 10% fiber content, (c) 20% fiber content, (d) 30% fiber content, (e) 40% fiber content, and (f) 50% fiber content	93
Figure 4.12 TPCS with 30% napier grass fiber sample tray	94
Figure 4.13 Application of TPCS with Napier Grass Fiber as tray for mini pot plant base and accessories tray	95
Figure 5.1 TPCS with 30% napier grass fiber sample tray	99
Figure 5.2 Application of TPCS with Napier Grass Fiber as tray for mini pot plant base and accessories tray	100



Figure 5.3 Surveys on Packaging Tray Application at (a) F Zack Enterprise and (b) Sofia Tomyam	100
Figure 5.4 The Survey Result from F Zack Enterprise	100
Figure 5.5 The Survey Result from Sofia Tomyam	101



## LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix 1	Gantt Chart for Semester 1 2021/2022	117
Appendix 2	Gantt Chart for Semester 2 2021/2022	117
Appendix 3	Turnitin Report for Semester 2 2021/2022	118



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Because of global environmental problems and greater knowledge of clean green alternatives, considerable effort has been made in providing environmentally safe and biodegradable textiles for the future generation of composites. The use of natural materials in composites reduces greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint of composites. A suitable solution would be green composites for oil-based materials (Gholampour & Ozbakkaloglu, 2020). Natural fibers are biodegradable, biocompatible, environmentally friendly and organic. Therefore, it is widely used in many applications instead of costly and non-renewable conventional fibers, such as glass fiber, carbon fiber, and aramid fiber (Syduzzaman et al., 2020). Around the last several years, people all over the world have grown increasingly aware of and worried about environmental concerns. Water pollution, air pollution, and landfill issues have all been exacerbated by the usage of non-biodegradable plastics. All of these issues have resulted in research into biodegradable materials such as thermoplastic starch (TPS), which is derived from natural resources. In 2015, the annual production of petroleum-based plastic exceeded 300 million tons, with less than 1% being bioplastic. Bioplastics advancements make it feasible to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and plastic waste, as well as carbon dioxide emissions.

Natural fibers are having been used as raw materials to produce bio composite for replacing the plastic. Copious amount of literature is available where natural fibers has been used to produce reinforced bio-based polymeric composite (Pickering et al., 2016). Due to

its great productivity and nutritional content, *Pennisetum purpureum*, or Napier grass, has become the most frequently utilized fodder grass in dairy and feedlot production systems (Wadi et al., 2014). Napier grass is an easier-to-grow kind of grass that's also better suited to Malaysia's climate as well as for animal feed, the Napier grass is a good source of biomass in most tropical and sub-tropical regions (Kamaruddin et al., 2018). Additionally, natural fibers have a low density, a high specific strength, and a high degree of stiffness, and they contain different types of functional groups easy to modification (Pickering et al., 2016).

Non-biodegradable material consumption has had a huge detrimental impact on both society and the environment. Biodegradable substance is composed of a synthetic polymer derived from petroleum that is difficult to disintegrate in landfills, posing a threat to the environment. TPSs can now be seen of as a new class of low-cost, environmentally friendly polymers that can be restored to their original condition without causing pollution. TPS materials are frequently composed of a starch, glycerol, and water mixture (Nafchi et al., 2013). Recently, about 50% of bioplastic preparations were generated from starch, owing to the simplicity with which bioplastic-based starch may be manufactured and its extensive use in packaging applications. A study from Filho et al., (2020) stated that, because starch is hydrophilic, natural thermoplastic starch has the maximum solubility value.

TPS is a substance that is formed when a starch granule undergoes structural disruption (modification) due to the action of shear force and temperature in the presence of plasticizers that do not readily evaporate throughout the processing (Bastioli, 2001). According to Li et al., (2011), thermoplastic starch degrades more rapidly than native starch. The amount of glycerol in the thermoplastic starch has no discernible influence on its biodegradation behavior, but the amount of thermoplastic starch itself contributed to biodegradation through a considerable increase in TPS surface area. TPS's susceptibility to moisture and retrogradation processes restrict its applicability in a variety of applications.

Thus, it is prudent to minimize the use of non-biodegradable plastic and to promote the use of biodegradable plastic.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

One of the unintended consequences of technological advancements is nature's incapacity to breakdown the chemicals people make. For instance, the polythene used in shopping bags is non-biodegradable, meaning it does not naturally degrade in landfills. Non-biodegradable trash may persist for generations and wreak havoc on the ecosystem in ways that go beyond the land. Within a few decades, plastic has surpassed oil as the most polluting material in the world's seas (80% of marine litter is made of plastic), owing to its extremely slow degradability and the rising buildup of human waste products (Gewert et al., 2015). Plastics are abundant in the oceans and provide an ideal environment for bacteria to adhere and thrive. Understanding the processes of biofouling is critical for understanding the ecological effects and destiny of plastics in the marine environment (El-Rafie et al., 2014).

The deforestation caused by the extraction of wood for wood-based businesses has had an effect on the environment. Alternative fibers derived from non-wood sources will be an excellent way to avoid environmental degradation caused by tree harvesting. Haameem et al., (2016) stated that the availability of Napier grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*), which is classified as an agricultural waste item, indicates that it has a great potential for use as a substitute fiber. Napier grass is a member of the Phocaea family and the genus *Pennisetum* (Lokantara et al., 2020). This perennial grass may reach a height of 2–44 m and has leaves ranging in size from 30–120 cm. Additionally, Napier grass is used to create hedgerows to avoid soil erosion. Napier grass is abundant in structural cell wall carbohydrates, which rapidly enhance the fiber strength.

Current findings have focused on the development of environmentally friendly materials with the aim of resolving the problems created by petroleum-derived goods. Due to its renewability, complete biodegradability, and low cost, starch is a potential biopolymer for the manufacture of bio composite materials. Starch, in the form of its thermoplastic derivate (TPS), has been discovered as a viable alternative to synthetic polymers often utilized in traditional packaging. Starch by alone, thermoplastic starch (TPS) has poor mechanical qualities like low tensile strength and extreme deformations, as well as low gas permeability and poor water vapor barrier properties, which restricts its application in packaging or film (Pacheco et al., 2016). The inclusion of starch in thermoplastic starch is advantageous due to the starch's tensile characteristics and the use of glycerol as a plasticizer (Marichelvam et al., 2019). As a result, adequate modification is required to improve the material's qualities.

A few studies and research that has been conducted to enhance the capability of biodegradable material in order to replace the conventional thermoplastic. One of the studies that has been conducted by Daud et al., (2014) which utilize the usage of napier grass fiber in the composite. The chemical composition examination of napier grass revealed that it has a significant amount of cellulose and a negligible amount of lignin, resulting in a high-quality fiber. Additionally, the scanning electron microscopic study demonstrates that the condensed and packed organization of Napier fiber makes it a viable alternative fiber capable of enhancing the composite's characteristics. Thus, Napier grass, a plentiful agricultural waste item in Malaysia, has the potential to become a new and effective supply of fiber for the paper-making sector. This finding demonstrates that natural fiber may also be used as a filler in biodegradable composites.

Therefore, the main idea in conducting this study is to provide good information based on the method and procedure to improve the weakness of thermoplastic starch. Other

than that, this study also done in order to build a material that gives positive impact towards the environmental and construct a better material as alternative to petroleum-based product. This study provides the knowledge of napier grass fiber and hence, utilize the Napier grass fiber to become the reinforcement of the thermoplastic starch in order to create a fully biodegradable material with enhanced properties. This research also was conducted to gain a better understanding of how NGF influences the thermal, mechanical, and physical properties of TPCS. As should be noted, the NGF used in this study was not chemically altered or manipulated in any way.

### 1.3 Objective of Study

The main aim in this paper studies are: -

- a) To produce biodegradable TPCS reinforced with Napier grass fiber composites.
- b) To investigate the mechanical and thermal properties.
- c) To produce biodegradable packaging tray of TPCS from the Napier grass fiber composite.

### 1.4 Significance of Study

The justification of this study are as follows:

- The outcomes of the recent study might deliver a new information regarding to the biodegradable TPCS reinforced with Napier grass fiber composite.
- The problem related to the environmental pollution might be reduced by applying the fully bio-composite material started from Napier grass fiber and TPCS.

- The problem caused by the conventional thermoplastic also can be diminished by introducing the new material from cassava starch.
- More value added to the existence of napier grass fiber by implemented beeswax and cassava starch and using it as new reinforcement material in producing bio-composite product.

### 1.5 Scope of Study

Based on the first objective point from this paper, the main raw materials used are cassava starch, Napier grass fiber, beeswax, and glycerol. The mixture of TPCS formed by combining the cassava starch with glycerol by referring to the suitable percentage of formulation. The glycerol act as the plasticizer in this study.

Further, for the second objective point, the Napier grass fiber is an alternative fiber derived from non-wood sources that will help minimize environmental degradation caused by tree harvesting. The availability of Napier grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*), which is classified as an agricultural waste item, indicates that it has a great potential for use as a substitute fiber.

Afterwards for the third objective points, the uses of Napier grass fiber reduced the conventional thermoplastic causes. Beeswax is added to the mixture of cassava starch and glycerol regarding to the suitable percentage of formulation. The function of beeswax in this study is act as the protective agent towards water absorption and moisture.

Subsequently, for the last objective points, more value added to the existence of napier grass fiber by implemented beeswax and cassava starch and using it as new reinforcement material in producing bio-composite product. The napier grass fiber was added as the reinforcement to the mixture of three raw material due to the percentage required for this study.