

TO STUDY THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT PROCESS ON  
THE MECHANICAL AND PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF  
THE COCONUT COIR FIBER REINFORCED LDPE  
COMPOSITE

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## BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS LAPORAN PROJEK SARJANA MUDA

**TAJUK: Study the Effect of Different Process of Mechanical and Physical Properties on the Coconut Coir Fibre Reinforced LDPE Composite.**

**SESI PENGAJIAN: 2009/10 Semester 2**

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## **APPROVAL**

This report is submitted to the Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering of UTeM as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Manufacturing Engineering (Manufacturing Process) with Honours. The member of the supervisory committee is as follow:

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to study and analyze the effect of different process on the mechanical and physical properties of the coconut coir fiber reinforced LDPE composite. The main raw materials used in this project are Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE) resin as the matrix materials and coconut coir fiber as the reinforcement material for the composite fabrication. The composite was fabricated by using two processes which are extrusion molding and compression molding. The composite from both of the process were analyzed in terms of mechanical and physical properties. The composite specimens were cut into the specific dimension according to the American Society for Testing and Material (ASTM) standard for testing process. The specimens were primarily tested for the mechanical properties analyze which is Tensile Test. The proportions of the composite compounding in both processes were used at the variety weight percentage, wt % of 92, 87,82wt% LDPE as the matrix material and 5, 10, 15 wt% coconut coir fibers as the reinforcement. The composite specimens were also conducted with water absorption test in order to investigate physical properties reaction of the coconut coir fiber reinforced LDPE composites. The microstructures of the fabricated composites were observed under the Digital Microscope to understand the fracture behavior, the fiber distribution and the surface morphological. The introduction of 3wt% of Maleic anhydride-grafted polyethylene (MAH-g-LDPE) was done. It used to the best formulated composites which indicate the improvement of the interfacial adhesion between the fiber-matrix interphase through the morphology observation.

## ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan menganalisis kesan proses yang berbeza ke atas sifat mekanik dan sifat fizikal serat sabut kelapa menguatkan LDPE komposit. Bahan asas utama yang digunakan dalam projek ini adalah Polyethylene (LDPE) resin sebagai bahan matriks dan serat sabut kelapa sebagai bahan penguatan fabrikasi komposit. Komposit akan dibentuk dengan menggunakan dua proses iaitu proses penyemperitan dan proses pemampatan. Kepingan komposit daripada kedua-dua proses tersebut dianalisis dari aspek sifat mekanik dan fizikal. Kepingan komposit dipotong mengikut spesifikasi tertentu berdasarkan piawaian ujian American Society for Testing and Material (ASTM). Pada permulaannya, specimen-specimen diuji pada Analisa Sifat Kritikal iaitu ujian tegangan. Formula sebatian terbaik komposit digunakan secara seragam pada peratusan berat (wt%) dengan 92, 87,82 wt% LDPE sebagai bahan matriks dan 5,10, 15 wt% serat sabut kelapa sebagai penguat. Pengujian specimen komposit juga dilakukan dengan uji penyerapan air untuk menyiasat reaksi dalam sifat-sifat fizikal LDPE / komposit serat sabut kelapa. Struktur mikro daripada specimen yang diuji dilakukan dengan menggunakan Digital Microscope untuk memahami perilaku , serat edaran, dan morfologi permukaan. Pengenalan 3wt% daripada Maleat anhidrida-polietilena (MAH-g-LDPE) telah dilakukan. Ini digunakan sebagai rumusan terbaik komposit yang menunjukkan peningkatan pengikatan antara muka antara gentian-matriks melalui mengamati morfologi.

## DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this report for my beloved family and friends.  
I am what I am because of them...*

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract	i
Abstrak	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of contents	v
List of figures	x
List of tables	xiii
List abbreviations	xv

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Background of the project	3
1.3. Problem statement	5
1.4. Objective of the project	6
1.5. Scope of the project	6
1.6. Structure of study and outline of the project	8

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction	10
2.2. Composite	10
2.2.1. Introduction of composite	10
2.2.2. Polymer matrix composite	12
2.3. Matrix	13
2.3.1. Low density polyethylene (LDPE) as matrix material	13
2.3.2. Effect on recycling of polyethylene material	15
2.4. Reinforcement	16
2.4.1. Natural fiber as polymer reinforcement	17
2.4.2. Coconut coir fiber	19

2.5.	Rule of mixture (RoM)	20
2.5.1.	Fiber content, density, and void content	21
2.5.2.	Elastic modulus	22
2.5.3.	Fiber loading	23
2.5.4.	Effect coupling agent to the compounding	24
2.5.5.	Effect mixture ratio and density on moisture content and water absorption.	26
2.5.6.	Effect of mixture ratio and density on thickness swelling	26
2.5.7.	Mechanical Strength of Polyester Matrix Composite Reinforce with coconut fiber waste	27
2.6.	Tensile strength analysis	28
2.7.	Water absorption analysis	30
2.8.	Morphological study	31
2.9.	Processing of composite	33
2.9.1.	Extrusion molding process	35
2.9.2.	Compression molding process	36
2.10.	Effect on extrusion parameter	38
2.10.1.	Effect of polymer properties in extrusion process	38
2.10.2.	Effect on density in extrusion process	38
2.11.	Fundamental of laminar composite in compression process	39
2.12.	Comparison between compression molding and injection molding Process in composite processing	40
2.13	Fabricated dumb bell by using injection molding	40
2.14	Effect the processing method to the natural fiber processing	41
2.15	Preparation of composite by using extrusion and compression molding	41
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>		
3.1.	Introduction	42
3.2.	Gantt chart of PSM 1 and PSM 2	43
3.3.	Material selection	46
3.3.1.	Polyethylene (LDPE)	46

3.3.2.	Coconut coir fiber	47
3.4.	Coupling agent	48
3.5.	Selection machine	49
3.5.1.	Extrusion molding machine	49
3.5.2.	Compression molding machine	50
3.5.3.	Injection molding machine	51
3.5.4.	Crusher machine	52
3.5.5.	Universal tensile machine	53
3.6.	Raw material preparation	54
3.6.1.	Coconut coir fiber drying process	54
3.6.2.	Crushing	55
3.6.3.	Density measurement	56
3.6.4.	Microscope study	56
3.7.	Sample preparation	57
3.8.	Sample fabrication	58
3.8.1.	Compounding of LDPE/coconut coir fiber composite	58
3.8.2.	Introduction of coupling agent	61
3.8.3.	Compression molding process	61
3.9.	Mechanical and physical properties	62
3.9.1.	Tensile test	62
3.9.2.	Water absorption test	65
3.9.3.	Morphological study	65

#### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSION**

4.1.	Introduction	67
4.2.	Characterization	67
4.2.1.	Fiber size	67
4.2.2.	Drying process	69
4.2.3.	Bulk density test	70
4.3.	Observation of sample preparation process	71
4.4.	Critical properly analysis- tensile test (ASTM D-638)	73

4.5.	Water absorption testing (ASTM D-570)	82
4.6.	Morphological analysis	84
4.7.	Discussion based on result	86
4.7.1.	Sample preparation	86
4.7.2.	Tensile properties	87
4.7.3.	Water absorption	91
4.7.4.	Morphological study	92

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

5.1.	Conclusion	96
5.2.	Recommendation	98

<b>REFERENCE</b>		<b>99</b>
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## **APPENDIX**

A	Comparison of Thermoplastic and Thermoplastic and Thermosets polymer
B	Comparison of indicative price of different raw material
C	Comparative on ranking of different plastic on a scale of 0 to 9, where 0 represents unfavourable property while 9 represents favourable property.
D	Technical Specification Rheomix 600
E	Technical Specification of Drive Unit HAAKE RheDrive OS
F	Design of Experiment (DOE) Method
G	Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)

## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	A classification scheme for the various composite type	11
2.2	Fiber reinforcement composite	11
2.3	Molecule structure of polyethylene	14
2.4	Effect of fiber on various properties of fiber reinforced nylon	16
2.5	Sources of cellulose fibers from various parts of plants	17
2.6	(a) coconut plant (b) coconut fruit (c) coconut coir fiber	19
2.7	Comparison between additional coupling agent with without coupling agent	25
2.8	The different fiber length and the density increase	26
2.9	Fiber coir seat cushion for Mercedes Benz automobiles	26
2.10	Typical load-elongation curve, showing the change shape at various test stage	28
2.11	Showing how the 0.2% yield strength and other tensile mechanical properties are determined	29
2.12	Fiber and matrix represented schematically	30
2.13	Water absorption of natural composite untreated	31
2.14	SEM micrograph the fracture surface of PE/ fiber	32
2.15	The specimen was broken by bending at 25°	32
2.16	Actual appearance and scanning SEM micrograph of the non-homogeneous mixture	32
2.17	The composition detection processing technique	33
2.18	Classification of composite processing technique	34
2.19	Single screw extrusion molding	36
2.20	Compression molding	37
2.21	The stacking of successive oriented, fiber-reinforced layers	39

3.1	Process flow chart PSM 1 and PSM 2	43
3.2	Flow chart of the frame mold process	44
3.3	Flow chart of the closed mold process	45
3.4	Polyethylene (LDPE) pallets	46
3.5	Short fiber length	47
3.6	Maleic anhydride-grafted polyethylene (MAH-g-LDPE)	48
3.7	Extrusion molding	49
3.8	Compression molding	50
3.9	Injection molding machine	51
3.10	Crusher machine	52
3.11	Universal Tensile Strength	53
3.12	Drying Process	54
3.13	Crusher process	55
3.14	Blending process	55
3.15	Density measurement	56
3.16	Microscopic study	57
3.17	Density Measurement Based on composition	57
3.18	Analytical Balance Excellent Model	59
3.19	Coupling agent	61
3.20	Compression molding process	62
3.21	Dog bone shape	63
3.22	Process fabrication dumb bell shape	64
3.23	Tensile test process	64
3.24	Flow chart the working procedure for tensile test	64
3.25	Water absorption process	65
3.26	Digital microscope	66
3.27	Morphological study	66
4.1	Microscopic view of fiber size and fiber length	68
4.2	Coconut coir fiber consist of 80% particle and 10% short fiber size	69
4.3	Graph total weight loss during drying process	70

4.4	Several result based on parameter setting	71
4.5	The variety composition fabricated composited after compression molding process	72
4.6	The variety composition fabricated composited after extrusion molding process	73
4.7	Graph of tensile test result for closed mold process (LDPE Virgin)	74
4.8	Graph of tensile test result for closed mold process (5% coconut coir fiber reinforced)	75
4.9	Graph of tensile test result for closed mold process (10% coconut Coir fiber reinforced)	76
4.10	Graph of tensile test result for closed mold process (15% coconut Coir fiber reinforced)	77
4.11	Graph of tensile test result for frame mold process (LDPE Virgin)	78
4.12	Graph of tensile test result for frame mold process (5% coconut coir fiber reinforced)	79
4.13	Graph of tensile test result for frame mold process (10% coconut coir fiber reinforced)	80
4.14	Graph of tensile test result for frame mold process (15% coconut coir fiber reinforced)	81
4.15	Percentage of weight gain at the ambient temperature	83
4.16	Morphological study to the composite material by closed mold process	84
4.17	Comparison the Ultimate Tensile Strength between two processes	88
4.18	Comparison the Young Modulus between two processes	88
4.19	Comparison the % Elongation between two process	89
4.20	Tensile sample of two process	90
4.21	a) closed mold sample; b) frame mold sample	92
4.22	(a)-(e) shows the morphological study for the LDPE virgin	93
4.23	Bubble formations while frame mold processing	94
4.24	Surface structure for close and frame mold processing	95

## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Density and mechanical properties of fiber	17
2.2	Comparison between natural fiber and synthetic fiber	18
2.3	Properties of natural fiber in composition with glass fiber	20
2.4	Comparison between properties coconut coir fiber and oil palm coir fiber	20
2.5	Chemical composition coconut coir fiber	24
3.1	Physical properties polyethylene (LDPE)	46
3.2	Mechanical and physical properties of coconut coir fiber	47
3.3	Technical properties of Maleic Anhydride-grafted polyethylene (MAH-g-LDPE)	48
3.4	Technical specification of compression molding	50
3.5	Technical specification of injection molding	51
3.6	Technical Specification of crusher machine	52
3.7	Technical Specification of universal tensile test	53
3.8	Composition of the LDPE/MAH-g-LDPE/Coconut coir fiber	58
3.9	Parameter setting for LDPE/Coconut coir compression molding	59
3.10	Parameter setting for LDPE/Coconut coir extrusion molding	60
3.11	Parameter setting for LDPE/Coconut coir injection molding	60
3.12	Standard dog bone shape design	63
4.1	Total of weight loss of coconut coir fiber after drying process	69
4.2	Density measurement of coconut coir fiber	70
4.3	Tensile test result for closed mold sample (LDPE Virgin)	74
4.4	Tensile test result for closed mold sample (5% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	75
4.5	Tensile test result for closed mold sample (10% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	76



4.6	Tensile test result for closed mold sample (15% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	77
4.7	Tensile test result for frame mold sample (LDPE Virgin)	78
4.8	Tensile test result for frame mold sample (5% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	79
4.9	Tensile test result for frame mold sample (10% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	80
4.10	Tensile test result for frame mold sample (15% coconut coir fiber reinforce)	81
4.11	Water absorption for closed mold sample	82
4.12	Water absorption for frame mold sample	82
4.13	Average tensile test for close and frame mold processing	87

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, technology of plastic is widely used especially in manufacturing industries such as Malaysia. Plastic is the general common term for a wide range of synthetic or semisynthetic organic amorphous solid materials suitable for the manufacture of industrial products. Plastics are typically polymers of high molecular weight, and may contain other substances to improve performance and/or reduce costs (Kalpakjian and Schmid, 2006). There are many new materials with enhanced properties are also developed to cater for the increasing design requirement of the new age engineering usage and applications.

The word plastics were first known to be used around the 1909's and commonly is employed as a synonym for polymer. Plastic are one of numerous polymeric materials and have extremely large molecules. Consumers and industrial products made of polymers include food and beverage containers, packaging, signs, housewares, housing for computers and monitor, textiles, medical devices, foams, safety shields, toys, appliances, lenses, gears, electronic and electrical product, and automobile bodies and component (Kalpakjian and Schmid , 2006). These substitutions reflect the advantages of polymer in terms of the following characteristics such as corrosion resistance and resistance to chemicals, low electrical and thermal conductivity, low density, high strength-to-weight ratio particularly when reinforced, noise reduction, wide choice of colors and transparencies, ease of manufacturing and complexity of design possibilities and relatively low cost.

Plastic can be formed, machined, cast, and joint into various shapes with relative ease. Plastic are available commercially as film, sheet, plate, rods, and tubing of various cross sections. Two major classes of polymers are thermoplastics and thermosets. Thermoplastics become soft and easy to form at elevated temperature; they return to their original properties when cooled. Their mechanical behavior can be characterized by various spring and damping models. Their behavior includes such phenomena as creep and stress relaxation, crazing and water absorption. Thermosets which are obtained by cross-linking polymer chains and can not become soft to any significant extent with increasing temperature. They are much more rigid and harder than thermoplastics and they offer many fewer choices of color.

In additional to the type and quality of the material used, important factors in the structure of composite materials are the size and length of the fiber, their volume percentage compared with that of the matrix, the strength of the bond at the fiber-matrix interface, and the orientation of the fibers in the matrix. Reinforced plastics typically are used in commercial and military aircraft, rocket component, helicopter blades, automobile bodies, leaf springs, drive shafts, pipes, pressure vessels, sporting goods, helmets, other structures and components. Glass or carbon fiber-reinforced hybrid plastics are available for high-temperature applications with continuous use ranging up to about 300°C. The processing of reinforced plastics can present significant challenges. As a result, several innovative techniques have been developed for manufacturing both large and small parts, particularly by molding, forming, cutting and assembly (Kalpakjian and Schmid, 2006).

## 1.2 Background of the Project

Plastic mixture technology is a very famous technique among the manufacturer in plastic industry to make new material that can improve the mechanical properties to support and solve the problems such as replacing the material that higher cost in production. This technique needs more experiments and studies because to setup a new material, a suitable parameter setting of a machine should be determine. However in this specific project, the additive (natural fibre) are added to the original material polyethylene (LDPE) and the machine parameter will adjust to its new content accordingly, further experiments have to be done to establish the parameter of this machine. This research will use two machines extrusion molding and compression molding and define which is the best process used in producing the product in terms of the best quality in mechanical properties by using the LDPE/coconut coir fiber reinforce composite.

Natural fibres have played a major role throughout human history. Even the earliest humans learned to use these resources to make shelters, cook food, construct tools, make clothing, paper, and produce weapons. Collectively, society learned very early the great advantages of a resource that was widely distributed, multi functional, strong, easy to work with, aesthetic, biodegradable, and renewable. Compared to synthetic fibres made from glass, carbon and steel, natural fibres have a high aspect ratio, high strength to weight ratio, relatively low in energy conversion, and have good insulation properties (sound and thermal) (Paridah, 2008). International research has demonstrated the technical feasibility of manufacturing eco-friendly composites based on biodegradable polymers, either natural or synthetic in combination with local wood or plant fibre resources. Although the polymers remain expensive relative to commodity plastics, perhaps presently three to five times or more the cost of resins such as PP, LDPE, HDPE and PVC, the incorporation of natural fibres provides a potential means of reducing total material cost while at the same time improving the material mechanical properties (Ray Smith, 2008).

The properties of polymers depend on the molecular weight, the structure (linear, branched, cross linked, or network), the degrees of polymerization and crystallinity, and on the additives. Additives have such functions as improving strength, flame retardation, lubrication, imparting flexibility and color, and providing stability against ultraviolet radiation and oxygen. Polymer structures can be modified by several means to impart a wide range of desirable properties to plastics.

Composite materials are an important class of engineered material with numerous attractive properties. A composite material is a combination of two or more chemically distinct and insoluble phases with a recognizable interface, in such a manner that its properties and structural performance are superior to those of the constituents acting independently. Three major categories are fiber-reinforced plastics, metal-matrix composites, and ceramic-matrix composites. Fiber reinforcements significantly improve the strength, stiffness, and creep resistance of plastic with particularly their strength-to-weight and stiffness-to-weight ratios. Composite materials has found increasingly wider applications in aircraft, space vehicles, offshore structures, piping, electronics, automobiles, boats, and sporting goods.

This research touches more on the composite product which consists of combining two or more constituents or material that is different from the common heterogeneous material. This researches represent about the combination between natural fibres (coconut coir) reinforced with the low density polyethylene (LDPE) thermoplastic material. A composite is considered to be any multiphase material that exhibits a significant proportion of the properties of both constituent phases such that better combination of properties is realized. Composites may be selected to give unusual combination of stiffness, strength, light weight, high temperature performance, corrosion resistance hardness, conductivity or cost effectiveness (Callister, 2006).

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Sanadi *et al.*, (1995) state that the low processing temperature permissible to the lingo-cellulosic fiber in thermoplastics is limited due to fiber degradation at higher processing temperatures. It is important to ensure the degradation of the coconut fiber will lead to control temperature processing or otherwise it will lead to the failure or poor performance of the fabricated composite properties. Therefore, the chosen suitable processing setting in terms of classifying the temperature is an important consideration for the fabrication of the coconut coir fiber reinforced LDPE composite. The standard condition of these composite will determined whether these material is suitable to use in extrusion molding or compression molding without causing problem to the machine and affecting to the mechanical properties. In a study on recycling of polyethylene material by S. Koseva, (2002), all result based on the experiment indicate that some degradation reactions (branching/cross-linking) occurred during processing/reprocessing. These cause structural changes into the polymer chains, which affect physical and thermal but mostly of mechanical properties. In this study, the research is conducted with the difference single processing in order to observe the effect on the mechanical and physical properties of LDPE/coconut coir composite.

Plastic material, both reinforced and none reinforced are potentially well to satisfy these new requirement such as fiber reinforced plastic and polymer-matrix composite, but the cost and performance of plastic component depend on the material, properties, strength and process involved. LDPE is an option to take as the research material which is their properties are quite low compared to others material and suitable for improvement in terms of high tensile strength, hardness, toughness, lightweight, easily fabricated and etc. The advantage of LDPE is low density, cost quite high compare to PP, HDPE, and PVC. Zampaloni *et.al* (2007), stated that the increasing of fiber loading will decrease the usage of matrix. Thus, less of matrix used in composite tends to save cost in mass production of composites. Natural fiber is an option because of its material low cost, material easy to fabricated and good properties. The uses of natural plant fibers as a reinforcement materials to replace synthetic fibers is receiving great attention, due to the

advantages of the renewability, low density and high specific strength (Ochi *et al.*, 2008). Thus, the introduction of natural fiber such as coconut coir, kenaf, hemp, ramie, and flex has attractively influenced the production of biodegradable materials lately, especially in manufacturing industry (Bledski *et al.*, 2002). Natural fiber like coconut coir can be used as replacement to the conventional fiber. The mixture between LDPE with coconut coir is the new material where natural fiber is mix with thermoplastic to improve the mechanical properties in terms of hardness, toughness and stiffness. Specifically, the good properties of coconut coir is suitable to use in the project because it lightweight, corrosion resistance, low to moderate cost, high thermal stability, has easy material ability process and make them as a reinforcement of choice by industry.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the project**

The main purposes of this project:

- 1 To produce a well mixed LDPE/coconut coir fiber by using an Extrusion Molding machine and a Compression Molding machine.
- 2 To access the effect of mechanical properties and physical properties of the fiber reinforced polyethylene (LDPE) composite by using difference process; extrusion process and hot press process.
- 3 To observe the best process of mixture LDPE/coconut coir composite in terms of the mechanical properties and physical properties characteristic.

#### **1.5 Scope**

The study was started by preparing and characterizing the coconut coir fiber as raw material to be used as reinforcement material in the fabrication of the coconut coir fiber reinforced LDPE composite. The materials used that related in this study are polyethylene (LDPE) pellets and coconut coir fiber. The study was conducted within the internal mixture single screw extrusion moulding machine, injection molding machine,

crusher machine and compression molding machine. The coconut coir short fibers were prepared by using the crusher machine to get the various size of fiber length. The size and density of the fiber reinforced were determined by using Digital Microscope and Electronic Densimeter model MD300-S, respectively.

In line with the objective of this study, both of the matrix and reinforcement were loaded into the hopper for mixing process in the internal mixture extrusion molding. Extrusion molding HAAKE model Rheomix OS (Thermo Electron Corporation, Germany) machine were used to well mix 5 wt%, 10wt% and 15wt% fiber loading into the mixture of composites. The effect of fiber loading for coconut coir fiber on polyethylene composite was investigated by standardizing the weight percentage (wt%). The increasing weight percentage (wt%) of the fiber is expected to increase the mechanical properties. The fabrication process involves is the hot press or compression molding process and single screw extrusion molding process. The minimum and maximum temperature was used are 130°C and 180 °C.

The effect of the mixer variety weight percentage of the matrix and reinforcement were examined and analyzed by using tensile test for analyse the mechanical properties and for analyse the physical properties will using water absorption test. The testing process was conducted with four set for each type testing.

The Microstructure analysis for the fracture surface and composition of the fabricated composites will be observed by using the Digital Microscope in order to relate the morphological surface due to behaviour of the mechanical properties of the composites and to observe the composition compounding of the LDPE/coconut coir composite.