

EFFECT OF NANOPARTICLES IN CUTTINGS TRANSPORT PERFORMANCE
OF WATER BASED MUDS AT ECCENTRIC DRILL PIPE

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ABSTRACT

One of the major issues for drilling operations is achieving effective cuttings transport, particularly in extended-reach drillings (ERD) with horizontal and highly deviated sections. The main objective of the present study is to investigate and compare the application of different nanoparticles (NPs), such as nanosilica (SiO_2), aluminium oxide (Al_2O_3), magnesium oxide (MgO), and copper oxide (CuO) for improvement in cuttings transport in a full wellbore section at both eccentric and concentric drill pipes. Water-based mud (WBM) was mixed with 0.13 and 0.26 wt.% of each of the NPs to create NP drilling fluids, which were then tested for rheological and filtration characteristics. The flow loop is 20 feet long, 2.4 inches wide (2.4-in. ID), and 1.4 inches thick (1.4-in OD). By circulating the tested fluid samples into the test section vertically to horizontally while controlling the flow rates (1.9, 2.15, 2.4 L/s), cuttings sizes (1.10–1.4 mm; 1.5–1.7 mm; 1.8–2.0 mm), hole angles (0, 30, 60, and 90°), and drill pipe eccentricity ($e = 0$; $e = 1.0$), the cuttings transport experiments were carried out. Simulating actual field circumstances is the aim of such a change in the operating parameters. The parameter used to assess hole cleaning is known as the "cuttings transport ratio (CTR)," which is calculated as the weight of recovered cuttings divided by the weight of injected cuttings. According to the findings, conventional WBMs' rheological properties are successfully improved by NPs, which improves borehole cleaning and drilled cutting suspension. With a higher NP concentration, the WBM's filtration capabilities were enhanced. The ideal concentration of NPs for rheological characteristics is 0.13 wt.%, whereas the ideal concentration for filtration control properties is 0.26 wt.%. In contrast, MgO yielded the lowest CTR, followed by SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , and drilling muds containing CuO mud samples produced the highest CTR. Their unique morphologies and various interactions with bentonite in the fluid system were linked to these variations in CTR. The cuttings are best transported at 0°, then 30°, next 90°, with 60° being the least-cleaning hole angle. Cutting behaviour is heavily influenced by the slope and geometry of the hole. At various flow rates, the concentric annulus provided a greater CTR than the eccentric drill pipe. However, flowrate is a major factor in eccentricity, and flow rates greater than 2.4 L/s may result in higher CTE pipe eccentricity. This research is the first effort to assess the use of various NP additions to improve the capacity of drilling fluids to circulate and move drilled cuttings out of the wellbore. With the help of NPs, the cuttings transport performance of WBM can be reasonably improved, and the project risks may thus be reduced. Thus, the study is expected to open new directions in developing NPs material as potential cuttings transport agents.

ABSTRAK

Salah satu isu utama untuk operasi penggerudian ialah mencapai pengangkutan keratan yang berkesan, terutamanya dalam penggerudian jangkauan lanjutan (ERD) dengan bahagian mendatar dan sangat menyimpang. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat dan membandingkan penggunaan zarah nano (NPs) yang berbeza, seperti nanosilika (SiO₂), aluminium oksida (Al₂O₃), magnesium oksida (MgO), dan kuprum oksida (CuO) untuk penambahbaikan dalam keratan. mengangkut dalam bahagian telaga penuh di kedua-dua paip gerudi sipi dan sepusat. Lumpur berasaskan air (WBM) dicampur dengan 0.13 dan 0.26 wt.% setiap NP untuk mencipta cecair penggerudian NP, yang kemudiannya diuji untuk ciri reologi dan penapisan. Gelung aliran adalah 20 kaki panjang, 2.4 inci lebar (2.4 inci ID) dan 1.4 inci tebal (1.4 inci OD). Dengan mengedarkan sampel bendalir yang diuji ke dalam bahagian ujian secara menegak ke mendatar sambil mengawal kadar aliran (1.9, 2.15, 2.4 L/s), saiz keratan (1.10–1.4 mm; 1.5–1.7 mm; 1.8–2.0 mm), sudut lubang (0, 30, 60, dan 90°), dan kesipian paip gerudi ($e = 0$; $e = 1.0$), eksperimen pengangkutan keratan telah dijalankan. Mensimulasikan keadaan medan sebenar adalah matlamat perubahan sedemikian dalam parameter operasi. Parameter yang digunakan untuk menilai pembersihan lubang dikenali sebagai "nisbah pengangkutan keratan (CTR)," yang dikira sebagai berat keratan pulih dibahagikan dengan berat keratan yang disuntik. Menurut penemuan, sifat reologi WBM konvensional berjaya diperbaiki oleh NP, yang menambah baik pembersihan lubang gerudi dan penggantungan pemotongan gerudi. Dengan kepekatan NP yang lebih tinggi, keupayaan penapisan WBM telah dipertingkatkan. Kepekatan ideal NP untuk ciri reologi ialah 0.13 wt.%, manakala kepekatan ideal untuk sifat kawalan penapisan ialah 0.26 wt.%. Sebaliknya, MgO menghasilkan CTR terendah, diikuti oleh SiO₂, Al₂O₃, dan lumpur penggerudian yang mengandungi sampel lumpur CuO menghasilkan CTR tertinggi. Morfologi unik mereka dan pelbagai interaksi dengan bentonit dalam sistem bendalir dikaitkan dengan variasi dalam CTR ini. Keratan paling baik diangkut pada 0°, kemudian 30°, 90° seterusnya, dengan 60° ialah sudut lubang paling kurang pembersihan. Tingkah laku pemotongan banyak dipengaruhi oleh cerun dan geometri lubang. Pada pelbagai kadar aliran, anulus sepusat memberikan CTR yang lebih besar daripada paip gerudi eksentrik. Walau bagaimanapun, kadar alir adalah faktor utama dalam kesipian, dan kadar aliran lebih daripada 2.4 L/s boleh mengakibatkan kesipian paip CTE yang lebih tinggi. Penyelidikan ini merupakan usaha pertama untuk menilai penggunaan pelbagai tambahan NP untuk meningkatkan kapasiti cecair penggerudian untuk mengedar dan memindahkan keratan gerudi keluar dari lubang telaga. Dengan bantuan NP, prestasi pengangkutan keratan WBM boleh dipertingkatkan dengan munasabah, dan risiko projek boleh dikurangkan. Justeru, kajian ini dijangka membuka hala tuju baharu dalam membangunkan bahan NP sebagai agen pengangkutan keratan yang berpotensi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANN	-	Artificial Neural Network
GA	-	Genetic Algorithm
PSO	-	Particle Swarm Optimization
MTS	-	Mahalanobis Taguchi System
MD	-	Mahalanobis Distance
TM	-	Taguchi Method
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
XML	-	Extensible Markup Language
ANN	-	Artificial Neural Network
GA	-	Genetic Algorithm
PSO	-	Particle Swarm Optimization

LIST OF SYMBOLS

δ	-	Minimal error
D, d	-	Diameter
F	-	Force
v	-	Velocity
p	-	Pressure
I	-	Moment of Inertia
r	-	Radius
Re	-	Reynold Number

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Due to rising energy needs and declining production, continuous work is needed to expand new technological frontiers in oilfield operations. It is not possible to extract the hydrocarbon reserves found lower than shale and close to the depletion stage using conventional techniques. As a result, unconventional hydrocarbon sources beneath must be drilled with creativity (Hassan, 2013). Because of the complicated behaviour related to the rheological characteristics of the drilling fluids under diverse drilling situations and environments, improved forming and engineering designing of the mud systems are essential to achieve a target of deep hydrocarbons reserves (Hassan, 2013). Different well types, including horizontal and deviated wells, are drilled to the pay zone to profitably extract oil and gas from reservoirs. Highly deviated wells, according to (Helms, 2008), have an inclination greater than 60° for the bulk of their length. Although drilling processes would need to be changed, it is possible to improve directional drilling methods to increase the inclination to $60\text{--}90^\circ$ (Boyou et al., 2019). To drill these high-angle wells effectively, modifications to standard drilling rig equipment could also be necessary. A horizontal well is one that is dug at a 90° inclination and kept there for a long time. Horizontal wells are substantially more costly than normal deviated wells because they require specialized equipment and longer drilling times (Boyou et al., 2019).

The ineffectiveness of conventional muds for efficient drilling and hole-cleaning operations has been highlighted as in recent times when drilling in challenging situations, such as deep-water drilling operations and extended reach. Therefore, there is a need for innovative drilling fluids that can be effective in such circumstances (Boyou et al., 2019). To drill and produce safely and profitably, oil and gas operating and service companies are searching for many practical methods to

handle challenging situations. Oil-based muds (OBMs) made by micronized barite, for instance, were studied in the North Sea (Kageson-Loe et al., 2007).

OBMs have shown encouraging results in shale inhibition, bit lubrication, and torque reduction (Rafati et al., 2018). Although, the use of OBMs in drilling operations is constrained in most drilling procedures due to their high procurement costs and treatment of hazardous waste. Water-based muds (WBMs) are currently preferred OBMs since they are more affordable and accepted by the environment (Rafati et al., 2018).

Initial drilling lubricant utilized during the operations of drilling was water (Brantly & Carter, 1961). Oil wells can be dug using just water; however, under static conditions, drilled cuttings cannot be suspended. Additionally, Absolutely not thick enough to maintain formation pressure and is unable to build an acceptable low-permeable layer on top of permeable formations (BOYOU, 2019). In recent years, WBMs have included a range of additives. Examples of these include barite and clay, as well as other insoluble weighing components including alkalis, salts, surfactants, organic polymers in colloidal solutions, and others. The type of formation to be drilled, the presence of dispersive minerals at the formation, so the cost all influence the choice of additives (BOYOU, 2019). Heavy muds were developed by addition of dense minerals to enhance mud weight for the control of pressure, leading to advancements in WBMs. The market for heavy mud was created by increased drilling activity. WBMs, however, have problems of low stability and drilled cuttings lifting capability limitation (Islam & Hossain, 2020). When drilling in shale formation, the clay can easily disperse and swell in WBMs (Islam & Hossain, 2020).

According to (Hall et al., 1950), removing cutting and sloughs is one of the drilling fluids' most crucial features. Drilled cuttings must be removed, especially in horizontal wells. Inadequate hole cleaning raises the potential for drilled pipe to be trapped in addition to limiting penetration rates because of accumulation of drilling cuttings in the pore hole. Wellbore cleaning is significantly impacted by mud rheology (Hakim et al., 2018). However, prior studies' findings on mud rheological properties and its effectiveness in the cleaning of the hole process have been contradictory. High

viscosity values, according to (Peden et al., 1990), improve cuttings circulation capabilities in the deviated wells. However, (Kelessidis et al., 2007) found whether it improves drilling mud viscosity in horizontal wells reduced hole cleaning effectiveness. This paradox may be brought on by the viscosity-induced transition from turbulent to laminar flow, which lessens the drilling fluid's capacity to clean the wellbore. Given that the flow regime is turbulent, (Walker & Li, 2000) stated that the results of (Kageson-Loe et al., 2007) in another study. They discovered that this condition works best in wellbore configurations that are horizontal or slightly inclined. They suggested that vertical or slightly inclined wellbores be drilled with a high viscosity drilling fluids that has a laminar flow regime.

For the next following drilling fluid slurries, the cuttings' dynamic behaviour is influenced by their size and structure. Cuttings' size and properties in drilling fluids affect how quickly they are removed from the hole and brought to the surface. The effect of different size of cuttings to efficiently clean the hole process has been the subject of several studies. Although earlier investigations (Peden et al., 1990) and (Walker & Li, 2000) found as the cuttings smaller in size so it is more difficult to transport, (Martins et al., 1996) discovered that larger cuttings are more difficult to circulate to the top. However, smaller cuttings can be transported to the surface more effectively if the drilling fluid's viscosity and rotation speed are high (Sanchez et al., 1997). (Shadizadeh & Zoveidavianpoor, 2012) discovered that as the size of the cuttings increases, the lowest transit speed needed for rolling and circulation of cuttings decreases. Accordingly, less size of cuttings are therefore easier to transport in terms of minimum transit velocity.

When drilling, particularly in inclined areas of a hole, gravity forces the drill string to rest on the low side of the borehole. Because of the extremely low fluid velocity, this introduces an eccentrically tight gap in the annulus the lower part of the drill pipe (Pang et al., 2019). The drilling fluids' capability to circulate cuttings to the surface in this area of the annulus will be constrained. The particle and fluid velocities of the small gap decrease as eccentricity increases, especially with high-viscosity fluids (Boyou et al., 2019). But given that well trajectories during drilling operations affect pipe eccentricity, such detrimental influences on the hole-cleaning operations

could be preventable. As a result, the effectiveness of cuttings removal decreases as pipes become less concentrically spaced (Boyou et al., 2019).

Rotating velocity is more efficient in slanted wells than in vertical wells (Sanchez et al., 1997). This means that rotating drill pipes can improve cuttings conveyance on the constrained side of an eccentric wellbore. According to (Busch & Johansen, 2020), the best conditions for effectively executing pipe rotation are low penetration rates and small cuttings for severely deviated wellbores. Beyond a certain spinning speed, Taylor vortices can also aid in increasing the effectiveness of lifting horizontal sections (Sanchez et al., 1997). As a result, when removing microscopic drilled cuttings, the drill pipe rotation factor is critical to consider (Cayeux et al., 2014).

Fluid efficiency in drilling in carrying cuttings may be impacted by pipe eccentricity. The conveyance of cuttings is significantly impacted by the pipe's location within the annulus. The average velocity of the mud slurry in the annulus is influenced by drilling pipe eccentricity. Some of the variables that are altered are the carrying capacity index, cut-off concentration, transport velocity, and equivalent circulating density (ECD). When diverging from a concentric annulus with 0% eccentricity to partial eccentric annulus with 50% eccentricity and to a fully eccentric of 100%, cuttings transport is thought to be less effective. Furthermore, when the gap among the fracture pressure and the pressure of the formation is very small, excessive eccentricity can lead to significant fluid loss after formation breaking (Ozbayoglu et al., 2010). According to (Epelle & Gerogiorgis, 2017), greater cuttings conveyance results from decreased cuttings concentration once the pipe of drilling is concentric with the borehole. However, eccentric causes the drilled cuttings and fluid velocities to drop in the small gap, particularly for viscous fluid; therefore, eccentric has to be studied.

When the annulus diverges from concentric to eccentric, the number of cuttings accumulation increases (Nazari et al., 2010). Cutting removal in deviated holes may be more successful than in vertical holes due to pipe rotation and eccentricity. This is due to the fact that the mud's ability to flow is enhanced by the average fluid velocity

and mechanical action that causes the pipe to spin (Heydari et al., 2017). These elements might have a big impact on how cuttings are moved using drilling muds (Heshamudin et al., 2019). (Ozbayoglu et al., 2008) investigated how pipe rotation affects CTE in holes with deviating and horizontal axes. They noticed that moving the drill pipe in a circular motion greatly enhanced cutting conveyance.

(Mahmoud et al., 2020) used a multiphase flow system by several air and water flow rates to inject different quantities of cuttings into an experimental rig to study the motions of flow in the hole-cleaning operation. They discovered that frictional pressure losses may be quite well anticipated by comparing experimental data to recognised models. (Ogunrinde & Dosunmu, 2012) found important elements that affect cutting transport and bit hydraulics at various inclination degrees in a separate study. To save unproductive time, they created a prototype for forecasting the ideal flow rate as well as the rate of penetration.

Similarly, to this, (Guan et al., 2016) uses the multi-dimensional ant colony approach to examine different hole-cleaning parameters in horizontal wells to enhance drilling operations. They discovered that when rising the rate of the flow and pressure-bearing capacity of the system can improve horizontal good hole cleaning. To improve the mud-lifting capabilities of water-based drilling fluids, (Boyou et al., 2018) tried polymer beads (polypropylene). They used various cutting sizes to evaluate cutting transport effectiveness in inclined static annuli and discovered that small size cuttings moved more effectively than big size cuttings because of the drag force on cuttings created by polymer beads. As opposed to that,, as cutting sizes reached bead size, the effectiveness of cuttings transport declined.

Recently, the use of nanomaterials has become more widespread, especially among scientists. Petroleum development and production benefit from the wide range of uses of nanomaterials oil and gas industry and reservoir protection (Belavadi & Chukwu, 1994). Studies indicate that the use of nanoparticles (NPs) greatly enhances the rheology of water-based drilling muds (Ariffin & Amir, 2011). (Irfan, 2016) discovered that regarding the cooling of bit, torque and drag reducing, viscous

behaviour, and low friction factors, nano-drilling fluids found to outperform traditional drilling fluids.

(Irfan, 2016) found that in terms of cooling of bit, torque and drag reduction, viscous behaviour, and low friction factors, nano-drilling fluids performed better than conventional drilling fluids. A number of experiments that added nanoparticles including silica, carbon nanotubes, and aluminium oxide to water-based muds also showed improvements in thermal stability up to 160 °C (Kang & Li, 2011). (Hoelscher et al., 2013) reduced pressure transmission in shale by physically plugging Marcellus and Manco's shale pores with nanoscale silica. The use of nanomaterials for fluid loss, rheological properties augmentation, and other reasons has been detailed in other studies that are outside the purview of this study. An extensive review of these efforts may be found elsewhere. In general, nanoparticles were used to solve a variety of drilling fluid challenges, including mud thermal stability at high temperatures, mud cake thickness, and filtrate volume reduction (Jain et al., 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

Conventional WBMs confront severe and difficult formations, such as deep and ultra-deep formations and high temperature and high pressure (HTHP) conditions, which result in limited temperature stability and thermal degradation of the drilling mud above 257–266 oF (125–130 °C) (Yang et al., 2017). As a result, conventional WBMs are unable to perform their necessary role in the drilling process properly, including lifting drilled cuttings from the bottom of the hole to the surface and protecting the formation from drilling fluid intrusion. Therefore, WBMs should be formulated with NPs, which have been found to be extremely stable in deeper drilling depths and extreme downhole conditions. This will prevent the degradation of conventional WBMs under challenging drilling conditions and ensure that they continue to perform their functions of lifting drilled cuttings to the surface and ensuring minimal fluid loss into the drilled formation (Boyou et al., 2019) (Jokandan et al., 2016).

There has been a lot of research recently on the use of NPs to improve the rheological characteristics of drilling fluids, but none on how to enhance cuttings transport in the wellbore, with the exception of nanosilica (SiO₂ NP) (Boyou et al., 2019) and multi-walled carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) (Ariffin & Amir, 2011). The use of these SiO₂ NP and MWCNTs, however, does not account for the effect of pipe eccentricity on cuttings transport performance, which could be necessary for efficient hole cleaning. Additionally, no laboratory research has been carried out on how alumina (Al₂O₃), copper oxide (CuO), and magnesium oxide (MgO) perform in the transfer of cuttings from the hole to the surface in a laboratory flow loop that is field-oriented. Therefore, using various WBM formulations containing SiO₂, Al₂O₃, CuO, and MgO NPs, this study investigated the effects of pipe eccentricity along with other drilling parameters such as pipe rotation, fluid velocity, cuttings size, and hole angle on the cuttings transport process.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the execution of this study:

- (a) How do SiO₂, Al₂O₃, CuO, and MgO modify the rheological and filtration characteristics of the conventional WBM system?
- (b) Does the presence of SiO₂, Al₂O₃, CuO, and MgO alter the conventional WBM system's ability to transport cuttings?
- (c) Does pipe eccentricity influence the efficiency of conventional WBM in the cutting transport process?

1.4 Research Objectives

The general aim of this study is to examine the performance of WBM in lifting drilled cuttings out of the hole to the surface using different NPs. This goal was met by completing the following tasks:

- (1) To determine the performance of rheological and filtration properties of WBM-free NPs and WBM with varying concentrations of SiO₂, Al₂O₃, CuO, and MgO NPs at 25 °C.
- (2) To determine and compare between the cuttings transport performance of WBM-free NPs and WBM-containing NPs when the drill pipe eccentricity is concentric and fully eccentric.

1.5 Scope of the Study

- (1) Formulation of a conventional WBM system without NPs.
- (2) Formulation of NP-based drilling muds by adding 0.13 wt.% and 0.26 wt.% of SiO₂ NP, Al₂O₃ NP, CuO NP, and MgO NP into conventional WBM.
- (3) Measurement of the rheological properties (plastic viscosity, yield point, gel strength), pH, and density of all the formulated drilling mud systems at a low temperature of 25 °C.
- (4) Measurement of the filtration properties (fluid loss volume and filter cake thickness) of all the formulated drilling mud systems at low pressure and low temperature (LPLT) conditions of 100 psi and 25 oC, respectively.
- (5) Determining the cuttings transport performance of the WBM-free NPs and the WBMs containing NPs using NP optimum concentrations cuttings sizes of 1.0–

1.4 mm, 1.5–1.7 mm, and 1.8–2.0 mm, hole angles of 0, 30, 60, and 90° at varied flowrates of 1.9 L/s, 2.15 L/s and 2.4 L/s in a concentric drill pipe (eccentricity, $e = 0$).

- (6) Determining the cuttings transport performance of the WBM-free NPs and the WBMs containing NPs using NP optimum concentrations cuttings sizes of 1.0–1.4 mm, 1.5–1.7 mm, and 1.8–2.0 mm, hole angles of 0, 30, 60, and 90° at varied flowrates of 1.9 L/s, 2.15 L/s and 2.4 L/s in a concentric drill pipe (eccentricity, $e = 1.0$).

1.6 Significant of the Study and Contribution to Knowledge

This study is significant and can contribute to knowledge in the following ways:

- (1) To overcome the limitations of conventional WBM at high temperature conditions.
- (2) To increase the efficiency of drilling operation with improvement in cuttings transport process by using less-viscous and dispersible drilling fluid of NPs.
- (3) The cuttings transport performance of WBM could be simpler with NPs thereby improving the drilling process for greater oil productivity and reduced drilling time and cost.
- (4) The incorporation of the NPs into conventional WBMs may contribute to the addition of new knowledge on drilled cuttings recovery at the surface.

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