



## Synthesisation, Fabrication, and Incorporation Techniques of MAX Phase and MXene Saturable Absorber in Passively Q-switched and Mode-locked All-fibre Laser Cavities: A Review

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 9 June 2023

Received in revised form 29 July 2023

Accepted 1 August 2023

Available online 9 September 2023

#### Keywords:

MAX Phase; MXene; passively Q-switch;  
passively mode-lock; all-fibre laser;  
saturable absorber

### ABSTRACT

MAX phases and MXene have been introduced in passively pulsed-laser generation for their viability as substitutes to unadventurous saturable absorbers such as saturable absorber mirror, multi-wall and single-wall carbon nanotube, graphene, and transition metal dichalcogenides, contributing to both Q-switching and mode-locking tactics. Fundamental saturable-absorber features such as nonlinear saturable absorption, astonishing depth of modulation, flexibly tuneable bandgap, and high electron density around the Fermi level, establish MAX phases and MXene as formidable contenders with decent performance in the saturable absorber regime. Recent research works contributing to MAX Phases and MXene—particularly in nonlinear ultrafast optics—have shown an exponential increase, since MAX Phases and MXene are of the prime regime of 2D nanomaterials that offer vast combination options by the formation of metal nitride, metal carbide, or carbonitride clusters with a 2D layered structure, with special emphasis on fabrication and incorporation of saturable absorbers into laser cavities. This review critically summarises the advancement on the synthesis, fabrication, and incorporation of the MAX phases and MXene saturable absorbers, as well as the incorporation methodologies and techniques into all-fibre laser cavities configured either in linear or ring configuration, summing up the identified issues and challenges and discussing future perspectives of this novel material.

## 1. Introduction

Pulsed all-fibre lasers have been employed in sensors [1], optical communications, digital services, spectroscopy, micromachining [2], medical systems and biomedicine [3], quantum information processing and material processing [4], and various other industries due to its unique qualities, including the ability to resist disturbance, upright the quality of beams, and high efficiency

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<https://doi.org/10.37934/araset.32.2.119141>

of energy conversion. Especially with pulse durations faster than a picosecond, these types of lasers have since shown further promise in a variety of other fields, including ophthalmology [5], bio-imaging [6], molecular spectroscopy and nonlinear microscopy [7]. There are a number of wavelengths in the near-infrared (NIR) area that are essentially practical; this includes the high-power ultrafast laser at 1064 nm and long-distance telephony at 1550 nm [8]. There are several approaches of producing optical pulsed lasers, mode-locking, and Q-switching, which can be characterised into two major categories: active modulation, which involves using an active modulator to control the cavity loss on a periodic basis, and passive modulation, which involves placing a saturable absorber (SA) within the laser cavity. For the creation of passive laser pulses, there are also two types of SAs in concern, one is the Kerr lens, which relies on nonlinear and/or birefringent phenomena, while the second is SA materials.

The interaction of light with SA matter is described by using nonlinear optics property. Nonlinearity, in particular, provides insight onto how materials respond to changes in the applied electromagnetic field's amplitude [9]. Saturable absorption, which has the potential to produce ultrashort pulsed lasers in the picosecond or femtosecond regimes, is one of the intriguing optical phenomena that are rapidly emerging as a result of nonlinearity effects. Intensity-dependent transmission is seen in SAs, but optical loss decreases with increasing light intensity [10]. Being a passive component, SA creates pulsed laser light through an all-fibre laser cavity's passive switching mechanism. Anticipation of the benefits regarding system size and portability, cost effectiveness, superior quality of beam, and superior heat intemperance of the fibre, the development of fibre lasers with ultrafast characteristics has attracted significant interest [11].

Out of a variety of ways reported subsequent to the initial demonstration of pulsed-lasers with femtosecond pulse-width through an intra-cavity SA dye cell—e.g., a dye laser with flashlamp-pump—in 1974 [12], there have been a large number of SAs for the development of giant and ultrashort pulsed lasers. There were reports on some man-made devices such as semiconductor saturable absorber mirrors (SESAM) or few materials that have great optical and electrical properties. SESAM is made up of multiple semiconductor material layers that were produced via atomic layer deposition or other microfabrication technologies, and these layers often contain a reflective mirror for the free-space alignment of a fibre laser cavity [12]. As a result, SESAM's two main weaknesses are the difficulty in manufacturing and the integration of an all-fibre laser cavity. Additionally, its broad applications are limited by inadequate beam quality, a minimal threshold of damage, and a limited operating bandwidth contained within 10 nm [13]. These devices use the nonlinear polarisation rotation [14] approach and nonlinear optical loop mirrors (NOLM) [15]. Two-dimensional (2D) materials have gained a lot of attention later in the realm of passive giant and ultrashort laser pulse production as excellent possibilities for SAs. The passively Q-switched and mode-locked fibre lasers established on 2D materials exhibit the nonlinear ultrafast photoelectric reaction of those 2D materials.

Retrospectively, Set *et al.*, [16] made the initial proposal for carbon nanotube (CNT) SAs for a passively mode-locked laser back in 2004. With many benefits such as superior nonlinear optics (NLO) exposures, low diffusion intensity, quick recovery time as well as sub-picosecond relaxation time, CNT overcomes the shortcomings of SESAM. However, the CNT's integration in longer working wavelengths, for example 2  $\mu\text{m}$ , is constrained by the challenges in chirality and tube diameter management [17]. Afterwards, Hasan *et al.*, [18] and Bao *et al.*, [19] made the first demonstration of graphene SA in 2009. Despite having an intrinsic zero bandgap for operating in the visible, near, and mid-infrared ranges, graphene's smaller on/off ratio of switching and low absorption of 2.3 % for each layer limit its laser output capability and useful optoelectronics applications [20]. Through

adaptable defect engineering, transition metal dichalcogenides (TMD) were shown to have scalable bandgap properties after graphene [21].

TMD has both semiconductor and superconducting properties, the ability to switch from an indirect bandgap to a direct bandgap, nonlinear absorption properties, and increasing modulation depth with decreasing thickness [22]. Yet only monolayer TMD commonly exhibits the direct bandgap feature, which necessitates a challenging synthesis and defect engineering technique [23]. By switching from an indirect to a direct bandgap, these mono-elemental materials can adjust their bandgap and other features [24]. However, they still face the problem of oxidative instability [25].

Gogotsi *et al.*, [26] originally found the MAX phase in 2011 in order to demonstrate 2D Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub> nanosheets, multi-layer structures, and conical scrolls in addition to the aforementioned SA materials, thus increasing research interest in this material in a variety of fields, including actuators [27], sensors [28], clean water generation [29], photothermal treatment [30], and lithium-sulphur batteries [31]. Due to their exceptional features, 2D transition metal carbides, carbonitrides and nitrides have recently received a lot of interest [32, 33]. These MAX phases or MXene was proven to display higher nonlinear saturable absorption due to strong electrical conductivity as well as extremely adaptable electro-optical characteristics [34-37]. Based on MXene Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub>-PVA film SA, stable mode-locked pulsations are effectively produced in a fibre laser [33, 35].

MAX phases, the antecedent of MXene, sparked intense curiosity in response to MXene. The broad formula for MAX phases is Mn+1AX<sub>n</sub>, where M is a transition metal (Sc, Ti, Hf, Zr, Nb, V, Ta, Cr, Mo, etc.), X is carbon or nitrogen or a combination with n = 1, 2, and 3, and A represents group III, IV, V, or VI element (Al, Ga, P, As, S, In, Si, Ge, Sn, , etc.), giving it a unique atomic arrangement structure [38, 39]. These sorts of substances give MAX phase materials the dual qualities of metal and ceramic, such as good oxidation resistance, elevated temperature resistance, and elevated temperature flexibility like ceramic and metal, respectively [40, 41]. The latter two characteristics are advantageous for producing ultra-short laser pulses. Furthermore, delamination makes it possible to create mono-layer MXene of a thickness of less than 1 nm and lateral diameters on the order of m [52]. Recently, passively Q-switched, and mode-locked fibre lasers have successfully used MAX phase Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> as SA [42, 43]. Following careful examination of the MAX phase materials in the system of Ti-Al-C, Ti<sub>2</sub>AlC was identified due to its distinctive characteristics.

By incorporating MAX phase Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> as the SA in any erbium-doped fibre laser (EDFL), Ahmad *et al.*, [44] accomplished the Q-switched pulse train in 2020. This was made possible by exceptional optical and electrical assets of Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub>. Following that, MAX phase materials such as V<sub>2</sub>AlC, Ti<sub>3</sub>CNT<sub>x</sub>, Nb<sub>2</sub>CT<sub>x</sub>, Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub>Al have been widely synthesised and fabricated as SAs using various methods and techniques for showing pulsed laser operations, by employing passive Q-switching as well as passive mode-locking [45-49].

This review studies the synthesising, fabricating, and incorporating techniques of MAX phase materials due to their distinctive features, with special attention given to Ti-Al-C combinations as a successful example. Hitherto, the utmost stable material in the Ti-Al-C regime is Ti<sub>2</sub>AlC [50]. Since Ti<sub>2</sub>AlC has a lower Fermi level than Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub>, it is simpler to achieve an electrical transition between bands. Additionally, MAX phase materials have a higher optical conductivity than anticipated for optimum photoelectric response [51]. Al particles react together with oxygen in the air to form a strange oxide coating that stops the material from further oxidising, giving the Ti<sub>2</sub>AlC a higher amount of Al atoms than Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> and a higher antioxygenic characteristic [52]. Due to these benefits, MAX phase materials are more environmentally stable and facilitate the generation of Q-switched laser pulses. While MXene may seem to be a more recent material than graphene, TMD, black phosphorus, and other materials, it has already begun to get scientific attention as a strong SA contender.

The recent innovation by MAX phases and MXene SA to produce Q-switched fibre lasers in the near- and mid-infrared frequency band will be the main focus of this study. The studies are anticipated to provide readers with more information about the investigation of MXene-based SAs in passively Q-switched fibre lasers. These studies may also inspire further research in light of numerous demonstrations, problems, and challenges, as well as the broader implications that these studies have brought about.

Much effort has been made on MAX phases and MXene synthesis and production in order to enhance pulse laser properties, notably with the all-fibre laser configuration and the influence of SA integration techniques into the laser cavity. The present state-of-the-art synthesis, fabrication, and inclusion of MAX phase or MXene SAs in all-fibre laser cavity architecture is the topic of this review study.

## 2. MXene and Max-Phase Synthesis and Fabrication

MXene molecule, which takes on several chemical forms based on the periodic table's M, X, and T elements, is created when the surface terminal group element in a MAX phase compound is exfoliated. The majority of MXene synthesis to date has been done top-down, particularly with regard to the selective etching of their MAX phases [53]. The synthesis and fabrication of MAX phases and MXene as listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** including  $Ta_4C_3Al$ ,  $Ti_3C_2T_x$ ,  $Ti_3CNT_x$ ,  $Ti_2CT_x$  and  $Nb_2CT_x$  as SAs are reviewed in this section.

**Table 1**  
Synthesis techniques of MAX phases and MXene

Synthesis and fabrication
Aqueous acid etching method (AAE)
Electrochemical exfoliation (ECE)
Two-step exfoliation scheme
Dispersion via AAE method (D-AAE)
Stirring and ultrasonic vibration (USV)
Liquid phase exfoliation method
Solution-casting method (SCM)
Fusion of polyvinyl alcohol with MAX phase
Aqueous acid etching method (AAE)

### 2.1 Aqueous Acid Etching Method

MXene molecule, the  $Ti_3AlC_2$  powder was combined for 48 hours at room temperature with 40 wt.% hydrofluoric acid (HF), washed many times with DI water, and the resultant deposition was let to dry in a vacuum-oven for 48 hours at 60 °C [54].  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  MXene can also be replaced by MAX phase  $Ti_3AlC_2$  in the final product. However, aqueous acid etching methods can be used as references to develop  $Ti_3C_2T_x$ . In Naguib's study [43],  $Ti_2AlC$  was employed as raw materials, and then ball-milled and heated up to 1350 °C for two hours under argon gas conditions. The powder was then exposed to 40 wt.% HF at a volume ratio of 1:10 at room temperature for two hours. The obtained deposit was centrifuged to separate the particles and cleansed with DI water.

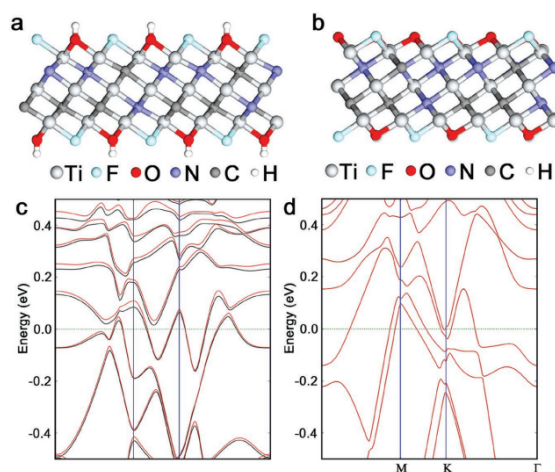
Using a volume ratio of 1:15,  $Ti_3AlC_2$  solution and 40 wt.% HF were combined to perform an aqueous acid etching procedure [55]. The deposit was cleansed with DI water to achieve a pH of more than 6, and then dried in a vacuum oven. After diffusing the powder-formed  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  in IPA below 20

°C temperature for 10 hours, the  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  was subjected to water bath sonication to exfoliate the material. The liquid suspension was then centrifuged for 30 minutes at 3000 rpm, followed by another 30 minutes at 18000 rpm for the supernatant. To create a suspension of  $Ti_3C_2T_x$ , the precipitate was mixed with DI water after the supernatant was removed.

Additionally,  $Ti_2AlC$  MXene has recently been shown to perform better than  $Ti_3AlC_2$  in a number of areas, including stability [56], electronic band transition [57], optical conductivity [58], and oxidation resistance [59]. However, this  $Ti_2AlC$  was produced directly from the commercially available product without the need for synthesis [57]. Polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) was used to create a composite out of  $Ti_2AlC$  in a 1:1 ratio. The characterisation of this  $Ti_2AlC$  was carefully studied using several techniques, including the XRD, EDS, and Raman spectra, SEM images, and absorption spectra.

Another work presented further aqueous acid etching method for the synthesis of  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  solution of nanosheets. The deposit was firstly dried up using a vacuum oven before the  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  powder was dispersed in N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone at a dilution of 1 mg/ml. (NMP) [60]. To get the  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  nanosheet solution, the supernatant was then centrifugated at 4000 rpm at 10 °C for 20 minutes. In another research work [61], a similar synthesis technique was also reported.

On the other hand, the energy of formation of  $V_2C$  from the fresh material,  $V_2AlC$ , at 2.981 eV, is regarded low compared to other MXene in the  $M_2X$  system, which may make it challenging to synthesise extremely pure  $V_2CT_x$  [62]. As a result, obtaining delaminated flakes is difficult since  $V_2CT_x$  does not have a precise crystalline structure [63]. The original  $V_2AlC$  phase was etched in HF and intercalated with tetrabutylammonium hydroxide (TBAOH) to create the  $V_2CT_x$  using aqueous acid etching technique [64]. The mixture was sonicated in DI water after the excess TBAOH had been removed, creating the colloidal suspension. The suspension was then spin cast to create a 400 nm thick  $V_2CT_x$  film. The flakes exhibit exceptional quality, softness, foldable and overlapped in several places. Based on the UV-VIS-NIR transmittance curve, the  $V_2CT_x$  exhibits a wide absorption spectrum, especially for thinner  $V_2CT_x$  films like those with a thickness dimension of 10 nm, spanning the wavelength range of 500 to 2700 nm without any discernible transition.



**Fig. 1.** Monolayer  $Ti_3CNT_x$  - schematic structures with (a) fluorine and hydrogen groups and (b) fluorine and oxygen groups, (c)-(d) the corresponding structures of electronic band, J. Li *et al.*, [66]

$Ti_3CNT_x$ 's physical characteristics are comparable to those of  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  [65]. Different surface terminations were shown in the monolayer  $Ti_3CNT_x$  schematic structure as given in [66].  $Ti_3CNT_x$  was created by substituting a nitrogen atom for one of the four carbon atoms to create a mix arrangement

of C and N. In comparison to other semiconducting 2D materials, monolayer  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  exhibits more prominent metallic properties as a result. In contrast to Van der Waal's attraction, the hydrogen bond is principally responsible for the stacking of monolayer  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$ . Indirect hydrogen connections are formed by intercalated water molecules or surface functional groups to form these hydrogen bonds [67]. As with monolayer  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$ , the electrical band structures of layered  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  are retained. This indicates that a successful SA is possible without a demanding technique to produce a monolayer solution.

By employing 30% HF solution to etch the Al layers from the  $\text{Ti}_3\text{AlC}_2$  raw material, an alternative MXene,  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  was created [66]. First, 20 ml of 30% aqueous HF solution was combined with 2 g of  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  powder at ambient temperature. The mixture then was agitated for 18 hours employing a magnetic bar. The mixture was then centrifuged at a speed of 3500 rpm for 3 minutes after being washed with DI water, mixed for 1 minute, and dried. This procedure was done five times, and then the supernatant was decanted until its pH level was more than 6. The multi-layered  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  was then delaminated by combining the  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  sediment with an aqueous mixture of 55% TBA-OH at a ratio of 100:1. After that, the mixture was stirred at ambient temperature for 4 hours. The mix was then centrifuged for 2 minutes at 3500 rpm, and the supernatant was then decanted. To further disseminate the particles, DI water was added after which the sediment was centrifuged and the remaining TBAOH was removed by transferring the supernatant three times. Then the residue was given 100 ml of DI water. After being sonicated for nearly one hour, the mixture was centrifuged at the revolution of 3500 rpm for an additional hour. Finally, the mono- to few-layer  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  supernatant was created. Both the monolayer  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  and their stacked systems' optical absorption coefficients, which range in wavelength from 1000 to 3500 nm, were computed.

Another illustration of how to make  $\text{V}_2\text{CT}_x$  powder is as given in [67] by using the standard aqueous acid etching procedure [68]. First, for 48 hours at 35 °C, the  $\text{V}_2\text{C}$  powder was constantly mixed in a solution of 2 g of 200 mesh  $\text{V}_2\text{AlC}$  and 40 ml HF acid. The mixture was then diluted with DI water, and centrifugation was performed numerous times at 5000 rpm for 10 minutes per cycle, till the pH value of the supernatant surpasses 6. The carved  $\text{V}_2\text{AlC}$  was accrued using a PVDF membrane (mesh of 0.450) for filtering, and it was then cleansed with 2 litres of DI water. Then, using a 400 W built-in water-cooling system and a constant temperature of 10 °C for 30 minutes, bath sonication was used to separate the layers (delaminate) the  $\text{V}_2\text{AlC}$ . The dispersion was then centrifuged for 30 minutes at 5000 rpm to extract the  $\text{V}_2\text{CT}_x$  nanosheet supernatant. To get the precipitate, the supernatant was centrifuged once more at 18,000 rpm for 30 minutes. This precipitate was maintained under vacuum for 24 hours at 80 °C.

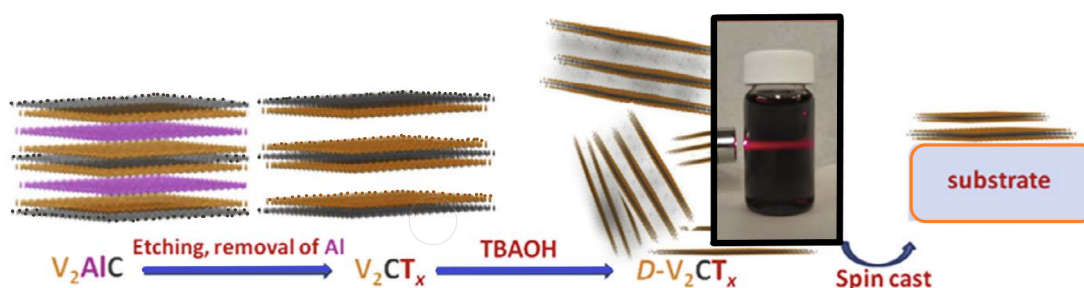


Fig. 2. Schematic diagram to prepare  $\text{V}_2\text{CT}_x$  to spin-cast the  $\text{V}_2\text{CT}_x$  film [106]

$\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$  research began in 2013, when Naguib *et al.*, [69] synthesised the  $\text{Nb}_2\text{AlC}$  successfully. The acquired linear absorption spectra have been used to compute the optical bandgap of  $\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$ , which is determined as 0.81 eV [70]. The approximate intensities of anomalous phonon-phonon scattering

and scattering of electron-phonon cause a substantial decrease in the thermal conductivity of the lattice in Nb<sub>2</sub>C [71]. In the near-IR region, Nb<sub>2</sub>C has been shown to have a high photothermal conversion efficiency and substantial absorption [72].

By treating Nb<sub>2</sub>AlC with a 50% HF mixture at ambient temperature, the Nb<sub>2</sub>C was produced using an acid etching technique [73]. After the etching, the surplus HF was periodically washed together with DI water and centrifuged until the pH was more than 6 at a speed of 3000 rpm. The Nb<sub>2</sub>C suspension was then collected using a cellulose membrane following filtering. The as-produced multilayer Nb<sub>2</sub>C was then thoroughly mixed for 3 days at room temperature in 30 ml of 25% tetrapropylammonium hydroxide (TPAOH) solution. The TPAOH was then eliminated by centrifuging the mixture at 15,000 rpm for 10 minutes after rinsing it with DI water. Following a redispersion in ethanol and dimethylformamide (DMF), the precipitate was centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 10 minutes to split colloidal from un-delaminated Nb<sub>2</sub>C flakes. Finally, a few-layered Nb<sub>2</sub>C nanosheet was created, and must be stored at 5 °C to increase its longevity.

## 2.2 Electrochemical exfoliation

It is anticipated that the MAX phases would have improved stability and superior qualities due to termination of the functional groups on its surface [74]. However, the addition of HF to the AAE procedure results in the synthesis of MAX phases or MXene that has oxygenic as well as hydrophilic termination groups, mainly, -O and -OH, on its surface, reducing its material characteristics and environmental stability [75].

Aqueous HF etching is commonly used to exfoliate stacked MAX phases; however, HF is a very acidic solvent that can seriously contaminate surfaces and leave them with flaws [76]. This safety concern may be resolved by using a much safer and simpler electrochemical exfoliation-based synthesis method, for example, one that uses a highly fluorinated nonaqueous ionic liquid as the electrolyte to create Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> quantum dots (QDs) with improved constancy [112]. As shown in FIGURE 3 below, a three-electrode electrometrical system is used to build the synthesis tool. This system consists of a working electrode (bulk Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub>), an electrode of quasi-reference (Ag), and a counter-electrode (Pt).

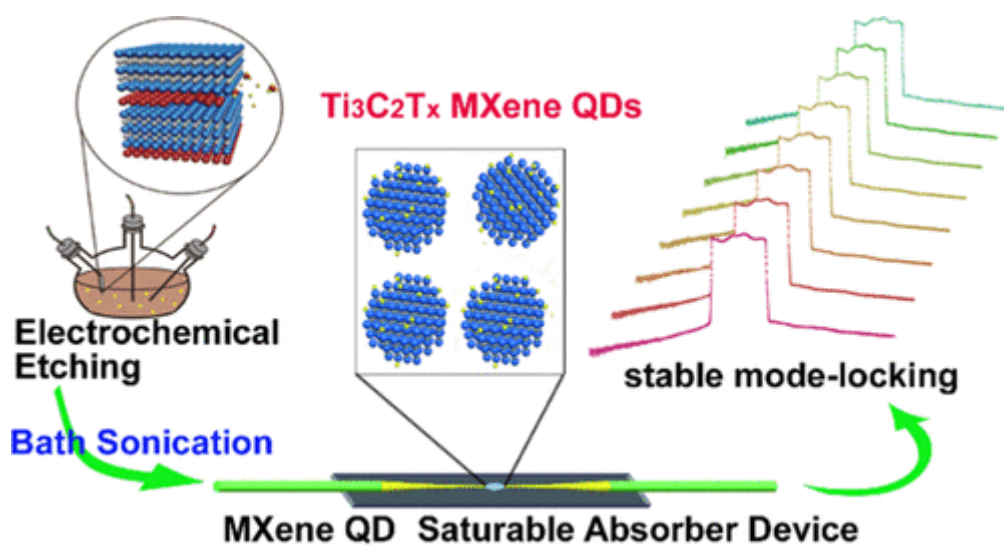


Fig. 3. Synthesis setup of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub>, F. Yang *et al.*, [111].

In order to make the nonaqueous electrolyte, 20 g of [EMIM][PF<sub>6</sub>] was combined with 100 ml of MeCN. Then, a 150 ml container made up of three electrodes and a glass tubing, was filled with the combined solution. The combined solution was then used after being bubbled with argon gas for 5 minutes. The Ag wire would receive a continuous potential of 3 – 7 V in a procedure lasting for 5 hours. The PF<sub>6</sub><sup>-</sup> was then electrolytically decomposed into F<sup>-</sup> while the Al layer was being removed from the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> by selective etching. Then, the electrolyte was observed to turn brown in colour and contain shards of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> and powder. Following that, two centrifugation operations were performed in fast succession; the first at 3500 rpm for 30 minutes to remove big elements from the electrolyte and the second for 30 minutes at 7000 rpm to collect the sediment. Afterwards, silts were added to the MeCN and ultrasonically treated for 10 hours at atmospheric N<sub>2</sub> gas pressure. The Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> QD was then produced by centrifuging the supernatant for 30 minutes at 7000 rpm to eliminate the contaminants of certain large particles.

### 2.3 Two-step exfoliation scheme (Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub>)

A two-step exfoliation approach as illustrated in figure 4 was used to produce nanostructured Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> nanosheets, resulting in nanosized 2D Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> MXene ultrathin nanosheets. Due to the increased manufacturing complexity for outstanding 2D topology, there were less investigations on 2D Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> nanosheets compared to other MXenes. First, the bulk MAX-phase Ta<sub>4</sub>AlC<sub>3</sub> ceramics were sintered for 2 hours at 1500 °C using a solid-phase sintering process. The sandwiched aluminium layer between Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> MXene layers was etched for four days at room temperature in 40% hydrofluoric acid (HF) aqueous solution. The delaminated Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> MXene was then ultrasonically shaken in deionized water (DI) for 15 hours. The solution was then centrifuged at 10,000 rpm for 10 minutes to obtain the supernatant liquid [49].

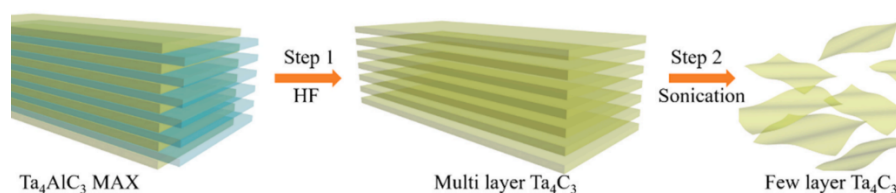


Fig. 4. Preparation route of few-layer Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> MXene using two-step exfoliation [66]

### 2.4 Dispersion via the aqueous acid etching method.

Aqueous acid etching has been used in various research papers to explain how to create Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> dispersion. The MAX phase Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> was immersed in 40% HF and agitated at 500 rpm for 20 hours at room temperature to create the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> flakes [77]. Once the pH was more than 6, the bulk Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> solution was collected and cleansed with DI water. After 24 hours of probe-ultrasonication using a cell grinder, the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> flakes were obtained. Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> suspension preparation likewise utilised HF etching with isopropanol as the solvent, and liquid phase exfoliation (LPE) was used to create the thin film [78].

### 2.5 Stirring and ultrasonic vibration.

Stirring and ultrasonic vibration (USV) could also be used for a straightforward synthesis method of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> solution [79]. First, a beaker containing 40 ml of 0.008 g/ml PVA solution and 10 mg of



Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> powder was agitated for 24 hours. The agglomerated Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> was then broken apart by cavitation using ultrasonication for 2 hours. The last step in the synthesis of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> solution was to separate the supernatant from the solid residue.

### *2.6 Liquid Phase Exfoliation (LPE) method.*

The LPE approach could be used to create Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> nanosheets in addition to USV [80]. First, a water bath at a temperature below 20 °C was used to dissolve 20 mg powder of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> into a solution of 20 ml of ethanol. After that, this dispersion was subjected to ultrasonic treatment utilising 200 W of power for 12 hours. After centrifuging the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> solution for 30 minutes at 3000 rpm to remove big bulks, the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> nanosheet supernatant was produced. Additionally, the LPE approach may also be used to create Nb<sub>2</sub>C nanosheets [81, 82]. First, 10 ml of IPA solution was used to dissolve 50 mg of Nb<sub>2</sub>C powder. The mixture was then sonicated for 4 hours at 40% power. The homogenous Nb<sub>2</sub>C nanosheet in IPA solution was then obtained by centrifuging the suspension for 10 minutes at 4000 rpm to remove any undissolved flakes.

In another study, a few-layer Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> MXene was produced using the LPE method. To remove the Al layers, the bulk Ta<sub>4</sub>AlC<sub>3</sub> was immersed in 40% HF aqueous solution for two days at 30 °C. After etching, the mixture was repeatedly washed with DI to neutralise it. Then, the mixture was centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 30 minutes to recover the multi-layer Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub>. Then, using an ultrasonic probe with a power of 500 W, the created multi-layer Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub> was re-dispersed in N-methyl pyrrolidone (NMP) solution and sonicated for 8 hours at 5 °C. To get the few-layer Ta<sub>4</sub>C<sub>3</sub>, the product was centrifuged between 5000 and 8000 rpm [111].

### *2.7 Solution-casting method*

The Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> powder was first etched with 50 wt.% HF at room temperature for 6 hours. Vacuum-aided filtering was used to capture the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> residue using a polyvinyl difluoride filter (PVDF) membrane. Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub>'s clay structure was dried up in a vacuum oven for 24 hours at 80 °C. The thin-film structure of the SA device was created using a solution-casting technique with PVA and Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> powder (PVA). First, a beaker containing 40 ml of deionized (DI) water, 40 mg of PVA powder, and 20 mg of Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> powder was swirled for 24 hours at room temperature. The resultant solution was then subjected to a 2-hour ultrasonication to disperse the Ti<sub>3</sub>C<sub>2</sub>T<sub>x</sub> particle agglomeration. Finally, the solution was applied to the D-shaped fibre as an SA device. A 5 ml portion of the prepared solution was set aside and allowed to dry for 48 hours in a clean petri dish. The thin dried layer was afterwards removed from the petri dish [92].

### *2.8 Polyvinyl alcohol fusion with MAX Phase*

Due to its good film-forming capabilities, superior tensile strength, ease of emulsification, and superior water solubility, PVA has been shown to be a reliable host polymer for thin film fabrication. PVA is a better host material because it can endure powerful laser light within the cavity; thanks to its high melting point of 200 °C, which is higher than that of polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) with a melting point of 160 °C, and polyethylene oxide with a melting point of 67 °C. Deionized (DI) water was used to dissolve the PVA solution's powder. An electronic balance was used to weigh 1 g of PVA powder, which was then combined with 120 ml of DI water in a beaker. The mixture was put on a hot plate and agitated for 45 minutes at 200 °C and 300 rpm. The next step was to combine the produced PVA solution with Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> powder to create a free-standing thin film SA. A few Ti<sub>3</sub>AlC<sub>2</sub> powders were

first placed on an electronic scale so they could be weighed. Then, 40 ml of PVA solution were combined with 10 mg of  $Ti_3AlC_2$  powder. The mixture was magnetically swirled for 24 hours at room temperature on a hot plate. The combination was further subjected to ultrasonication for 2 hours at the same temperature. The  $Ti_3AlC_2$  solution residue visible on the surface of the supernatant indicated that the sonication procedure was effective. A tidy petri dish was filled with 5 ml solution of  $Ti_3AlC_2$ -PVA and was left out in the open for 48 hours. Peeled off the petri dish was the dried 3-cm diameter MAX-PVA thin film with a thickness of 30 m [38].

### 3. MXene and Max-Phase Synthesis and Fabrication

The initial but most crucial step in this laboratory circuit level experiment—in setting up the laser cavity—is the inclusion of the manufactured MXene or MAX phase SA made from bulk MAX phase powder. There are several methods for creating the SA thin films that can go within the all-fibre cavity laser such as tapered fibres, D-shaped fibres, etched fibres, and flat-faced fibre ferrules.

**Table 2**  
 SA incorporation techniques applied with MAX phases and MXene

Fibre preparation	SA incorporation
Tapered fibre	Optical deposition
	Spraying
	Magnetron sputtering deposition
	Drop-casting
D-shaped fibre	Dripping
	Monolayer film
	Evanescent coupling
	Inkjet printing
Etched fibre	Syringe injection
	Immersion and optical deposition
Fibre ferrules	PVA composite film

#### 3.1 Tapered fibre

By progressively stretching an optical fibre while it is heated, for example, over a flame, until the glass softens, one can create a tapered optical fibre. With this technique, the fibre is thinned over a small area, perhaps a few centimetres or millimetres. The core of the fibre thins out by the same percentage as the entire fibre. A common process for creating tapered fibres is flame-brushing [81]. By melting the optical fibre using an oxy-LPG flame and drawing it through a translational step to lower its waist diameter, the flame brushing process is typically used to create tapered fibres [83]. For the interaction of absorbing materials with high heat dissipation mechanisms, the tapered fibre creates an evanescent field around its waist area [84].

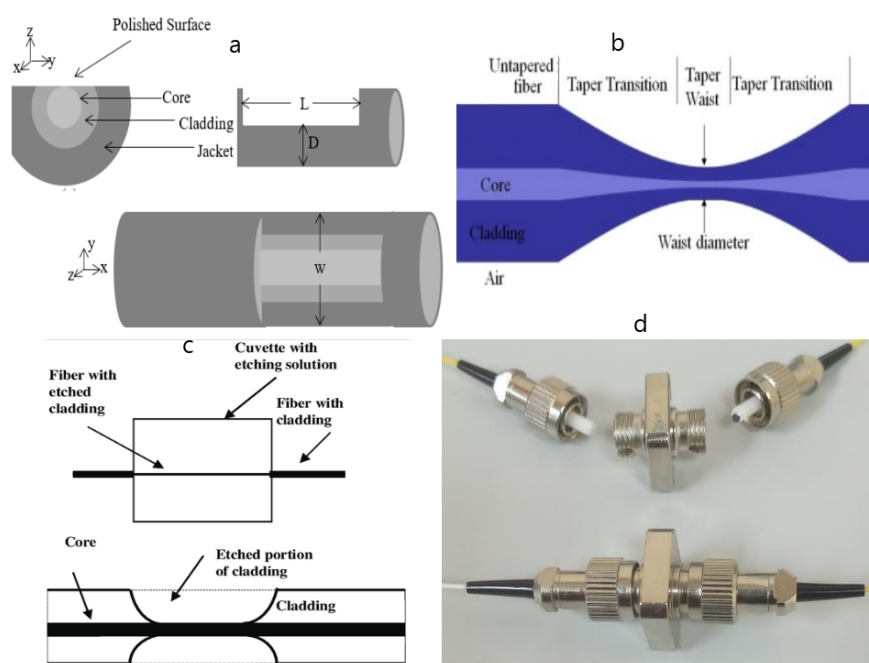
##### 3.1.1 Optical deposition to tapered fibre

On the tapered fibre platform, the SA can be created using a variety of techniques. The most frequent technology used to fabricate SAs is optical deposition. For instance, a H<sub>i</sub>-1060 fibre has a 5.2- $\mu$ m waist diameter and a 3-mm waist length [25]. The  $V_2CT_x$  nanosheets were deposited utilising the optical deposition approach employing a 980-nm pump on the waist section of the tapered fibre,

where material adsorption becomes apparent because of evanescent contact. The entire procedure was detected using a power meter. An oxy-hydrogen flame was used in the second tapering configuration for SMF-28, and the tapering resulted in a 13- $\mu\text{m}$  waist diameter [86].

A comparable optical deposition was used with droplet volumes of 5 – 10 l and a 60 mW light source [86]. When the optical loss reached 3 dB, the deposition was terminated. A further tapered fibre with 9.21  $\mu\text{m}$  waist diameter and an insertion loss of 0.69 dB was used for optical deposition of a  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  solution using a 980 nm laser pump and a power meter [86]. The deposition was along the 200  $\mu\text{m}$  length and the insertion loss is 1.39 dB. Under real-time monitoring, a tapered fibre with a waist diameter of 12  $\mu\text{m}$  and a waist length of 5 mm was also optically deposited with  $\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$  SA [22].

It took around 3 minutes to conclude the deposition. Another illustration is a tapered fibre using a  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  SA optical deposition process that has a 15  $\mu\text{m}$  waist diameter [77]. To ensure that the proper amount of  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  sample was injected on the tapered fibre, the optical deposition of  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  SA was conducted with a needle tube [87].



**Fig. 5.** Incorporation of SA. a) D-shaped fibre b) tapered fibre c) etched fibre d) fibre ferrule [47]

### 3.1.2 Spraying and magnetron sputtering deposition to tapered fibre

The  $\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$  suspension was sprayed over a 3.56  $\mu\text{m}$  diameter tapered fibre platform's waist region, which was placed on a 60 °C hot plate, evaporating the solvent as soon as it made contact with the hot plate, creating the SA [88]. The optical loss is calculated as 1.55 dB. Additionally, employing magnetron sputtering deposition (MSD), a few-layer  $\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$  N  $\text{Nb}_2\text{C}$  nanosheet was deposited on the tapered fibre [89, 90]. In order to increase film adhesion on the surface of fluorine mica (FM), FM was first hydrophilically treated with concentrated HF and  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ . After that, alcohol and DI water were used several times to clean the FM sheet. After treatment, an oven was used to dry the FM sheet. Then, a 40 °C oven was used to dry the treated FM sheet. The targets for FM and MXene were then installed within a magnetron sputtering chamber setup. A vacuum of  $6.8 \times 10^{-4}$  pa was created within the chamber using mechanical and atomic pumps. Finally, a consistent MXene film was

created by spinning the FM at 30 rpm. The MXene film was then sputtered on a microfibre substrate with a waist diameter of 18.03  $\mu\text{m}$  using the same pressure and rotation speed.

### *3.2 D-shaped fibre*

D-shaped fibre, also known as a D-type optical fibre has its cladding side polished, giving it a D-shaped appearance. There are several applications for D-shaped optical fibres, particularly in sensing. A metal and dielectric system have established a surface plasmon wave dispersion relationship. Another form of microfiber that causes evanescent contact with absorbent materials on its polished surface is also the D-shaped fibre [90]. Compared to the tapered fibre structure, the side-polished fibre structure is extra robust [91].

A higher nonlinear interaction length, a higher value of optical damage threshold, and a significantly increased interaction of light-matter are only a few further benefits of the D-shaped fibre [92, 93].

#### *3.2.1 Drop-casting to D-shaped fibre*

Another work provides a detailed mechanically based fabrication process for D-shaped fibres, which was used to drop-cast a  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  solution to generate the SA, with a 71.69- $\mu\text{m}$  fibre diameter, 4.69- $\mu\text{m}$  core-cladding space, and 1400- $\mu\text{m}$  polishing length [94].

#### *3.2.2 Dripping and monolayer film to D-shaped fibre*

For the ultrasonic dripping of  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2$  nanosheet dispersed with 0.1 mg NMP, an additional D-shaped fibre with 6- $\mu\text{m}$  polishing depth from the centre was used [95]. Insertion loss and polarisation determined loss (PDL) of a stacked  $\text{Ti}_3\text{CNT}_x$  monolayer film connected to a D-shaped fibre at 1557 nm were 4.5 dB and 1.8 dB, respectively [96]. The transverse magnetic (TM) and transverse electric (TE) modes' optical signal-to-noise ratios alter according to the PDL, which is a measurement of distribution of peak-to-peak optical power by all polarisation states [97]. As a result, the TE and TM modes significantly affect how the laser beam's saturation level is modulated, changing the depth of a SA's modulation evanescent coupling to the D-shaped fibre.

#### *3.2.3 Inkjet printing to D-shaped fibre*

Additionally, a D-shaped fibre with 6  $\mu\text{m}$  side-to-core depth was used to conduct the evanescent-coupling of  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  solution containing 6.67 mg/ml [98]. At 1900 nm, the insertion loss was 2.0 dB and the PDL was 5.2 dB. Inkjet printing is used to make use of the benefits of 2D materials for printed optoelectronic devices, including their tiny footprint, simplicity of integration, geometric compatibility, scalability as well as cost factor [99]. A D-shaped SA was created by imprinting a homogeneous, continuous  $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$  nanosheet film with a 35- $\mu\text{m}$  inter-droplet spacing on the D-shaped fibre.

### *3.3 Etched fibre*

The optical fibre was submerged in a 30% HF acid solution for 2 hours to produce an etched fibre in addition to polishing the D-shaped fibre using the aforementioned mechanical method [100]. The coating on the silica glass component was removed by HF.

### *3.3.1 Syringe injected to etched fibre*

The residual HF solution was rinsed from the surface of the etched fibre using clean water and ethanol. The etched fibre was placed in a protective jacket, and  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  solution was injected with a syringe. The liquid  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  within the protective sleeve was sealed by melting the ends of the sleeve with a hot iron and bonding them together with glue. Due to its geometrical symmetry, which is more robust than that of the D-shaped fibre, this SA structure helps to increase the thermal damage threshold brought on by physical contact [101]. However, compared to its application in a range of sensors such as biosensors [102], refractometric sensors [103], and humidity sensors [104], the employment of an etched fibre platform as an SA is less frequent. This is because its nanometer-sized fibre ends—the primary end product of etched optical fibre—are difficult to produce using either tapering or mechanical polishing methods [105]. Etched fibre manufacturing is more dangerous than D-fibre production due to the integration of HF and should not be handled continuously, even while wearing appropriate protection gear.

### *3.3.2 Immersion and optical deposition of etched fibre*

Another study involved dipping the etched fibre in  $Ti_3C_2$  solution to create SA [106]. By using optical deposition using a laser light source, the  $Ti_3C_2$  solution was drawn to the surface of the cut fibre.

### *3.4 PVA composite film in fibre ferrules*

The simple and slightly easier method is to construct the SA by sandwiching an absorbent material such as  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  between two fibre ferrules while manufacturing either the MXene or the MAX phase into a thin film [107]. A  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  composite film was generated by combining 10 ml of  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  with PVA solution of 10 ml that had been exposed to a 24-hour ultrasonic treatment. A 1-mm<sup>2</sup> piece of  $Ti_3C_2T_x$ /PVA composite film was inserted between two fibre ferrules to make the SA. The fibre ferrule structure is easier to manage and operate than microfibers due to material contact between the absorbent and the fibre ferrules. Nevertheless, it has a briefer length of interaction and lesser threshold of optical damage [108].

**Table 1**

Summary of MAX phase and MXene saturable absorber synthesis, fabrication, and incorporation.

Research Period		LASER Configuration			Incorporation of Saturable Absorber			Ref.
Research No.	YYYY-MM	Pulse Regime	Cavity	MAX Phase / MXene	Synthesisation	Fabrication or Deposition	Incorporation	
1	2022-02	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ta <sub>4</sub> C <sub>3</sub> Al	LPE	Drop Casting	Fibre ferrule	[111]
2	2021-12	Q-S	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ta <sub>4</sub> C <sub>3</sub> Al	Two-step exfoliation	Laser deposition	Fibre patch cord	[49]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ta <sub>4</sub> C <sub>3</sub> Al	Two-step exfoliation	Spin Coating	Fibre patch cord	
3	2021-11	M-L	TDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Microfiber Coat	Tapered fibre	[82]
		M-L	THDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Spin Coating	Tapered fibre	
4	2021-08	M-L	THDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Dripping	D-shape fibre	[95]
5	2021-06	Q-S	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[57]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	
6	2021-04	Q-S	BDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[47]
7	2021-03	M-L	THDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Drop Casting	D-shape fibre	[98]
8	2021-02	Q-S	HDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[46]
9	2021-01	M-L	TDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[56]
11	2021-01	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Spray & Evaporate	Tapered fibre	[84]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Drop Casting	Fibre ferrule	
12	2020-11	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[36]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	
13	2020-11	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Nb <sub>2</sub> CT <sub>x</sub>	-	Sputtering deposit	Tapered fibre	[92]
14	2020-11	M-L	YDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	EC Exfoliation	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[78]
15	2020-10	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	Stirring and USV	Drop Casting	Fibre ferrule	[42]
16	2020-07	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	PVA Fusion	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[38]
Research Period		LASER Configuration			Incorporation of Saturable Absorber			

Research No.	YYYY-MM	Pulse Regime	Cavity	MAX Phase / MXene	Synthesisation	Fabrication or Deposition	Incorporation	Ref.
17	2020-04	Q-S	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	SCM	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[45]
18	2020-12	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[83]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Film Attached	Fibre ferrule	
19	2020-07	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[90]
20	2020-07	Q-S	TBFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	LPE	Microfiber Coat	Tapered fibre	[44]
21	2020-03	M-L	YDFL-AF-Ring	NPE	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[68]
		M-L	YDFL-AF-Ring	V <sub>2</sub> AlC	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	
		HM-L	YDFL-AF-Ring	NPE- V <sub>2</sub> AlC	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	
22	2020-03	M-L	-	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[77]
23	2020-01	M-L	-	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[78]
24	2019-04	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Optical Deposition	Tapered fibre	[55]
25	2019-03	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Spin Coating	D-shape fibre	[54]
26	2018-06	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Immersion	Etched fibre	[100]
27	2018-01	M-L		Ti <sub>3</sub> CNT <sub>x</sub>	Interfacial technique	Solution Casting	Fibre ferrule	[36]
28	2017-11	M-L	YDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Solution Deposition	D-shape fibre	[60]
		M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> T <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Solution Deposition	D-shape fibre	
29	2017-10	M-L	EDFL-AF-Ring	Ti <sub>3</sub> CNT <sub>x</sub>	ACE	Film Attached	D-shape fibre	[66]

#### 4. Conclusion

Since conductors typically have poor SA properties, it is preferable to etch the terminating metallic element from the MAX phase material to create MXene. This is because nonlinear absorption is the most crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of pulse generation in both Q-switched and mode-locked passive-pulsed all-fibre lasers [98]. In particular, for all-fibre ring cavity lasers, the synthesis of MXene or MAX phases with exceptional nonlinear saturable absorption and adaptable grouping of  $M_{n+1}X_nT_x$  helps with the realisation of superior SA by employing a variety of manufacturing and integration techniques and methodologies.

As a result, the creation of Q-switched and mode-locked pulsed all-fibre lasers is expected to move toward other untapped MXenes with many more well-studied material properties in the future. In order to corroborate the theoretical prediction, a highly relevant and accurate experimental bandgap measurement for the MXene is essential. This is because the importance of bandgap is often illustrated by matching the laser operating wavelength of the Q-switched and mode-locked laser.

Based on earlier studies, it was predicted that the bandgap of MXene would be smaller than 0.2 eV, especially for  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  [26] and 0.81 eV for  $Nb_2C$  utilising the Tauc approach [70]. The truth is that even with enough modulation depth, high non-saturable loss SAs could not be used to create a mode-locked laser. In light of this, it is appropriate to discuss the significance of nonlinear saturable absorption and its effects on pulse performances in places where the factor of on-saturable loss was not addressed. It is also appropriate to emphasise the description of MXene SA's non-saturable loss in the study of MXene SAs. This parameter is crucial for describing the MXene SA's characteristics. Taking the example of  $V_2CT_x$  SAs, modulation depth decreased from nearly 90% down to below 30% as thickness of the film was increased from 11 nm to 116 nm [109]. On the other hand, the 73% non-saturable absorption loss in 116 nm thickness of  $V_2CT_x$  may not be enough to produce an effective fibre laser.

In addition to the significance of bandgap value, the most popular approach for the synthesis of MXene is the aqueous acid etching process. However, because the HF solution is extremely acidic, cautious handling methods and extra protection throughout the synthesis process are required. Since poor handling of the HF solution during the aqueous acid etching process—in the form of residue—may also cause serious contamination, electrochemical exfoliation is a more practical and secure alternative to AAE. To create MXene with improved stability, electrochemical exfoliation techniques use a highly fluorinated electrolyte which is a non-aqueous ionic liquid [75]. Another option to consider when working with materials whose bandgap value and stability during laser operation are unaffected by the removal of surface-terminating metallic elements is mechanical exfoliation of MAX phase materials. The most popular fibre platform for fabricating the SA is tapered fibre. However, most papers only discussed the tapered fibre's dimension without detailing on its adiabaticity that affects the dimension. For instance, a research study on the optimisation of strong evanescent fields and minimal loss tapered fibre with a short length would be fascinating [110].

It is scientifically advised in majority of these research works that the lifetime of MXene is increased if it is stored in restricted conditions, such as low temperature conditions as low as 5 °C to extend the lifetime [53]. Further research is required to improve the environmental stability and durability of synthetic MXene with its initial performances. MXene has to have better longevity and dependability so that it may be stored at room temperature.

The uniformity of the SA material particles across the host material will be influenced by the rate of flow and the potential fall distance during drop-casting and solution-casting, particularly in the PVA fusion method of fabrication, necessitating extra caution to ensure constant and consistent



dropping or casting of aqueous solutions. Particularly in the process of creating SA thin films, the vaporisation phase requires the same amount of care to be provided in terms of keeping it at complete rest and maintaining a constant temperature.

Concisely, this review paper describes the most recent advances in MAX phase, MXene, and SA synthesis for near- and mid-infrared pulsed-wave all-fibre lasers. Despite the fact that MAX phase and MXene are more recent than SWCNT, MWCNT, TMD, graphene, and other materials for SAs, their good nonlinear saturable absorption characteristics are extremely encouraging to function as a sustainable SA option. Table 1 contains a summary of all the research publications combined. The obstacles and difficulties encountered in the MAX phase SA synthesis field were then examined, and a number of recommendations were made to overcome these issues, demonstrating its potential for further development regarding this research topic. This study is anticipated to provide readers a better understanding of the most recent progress made by MXene or MAX phase SAs with mode-locked fibre lasers and its prospects for future use in both academic and commercial research. Few MXene and MAX phase materials were suggested as the SA up to this point, but  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  is the MXene SA that has received the most investigation and experimentation. It was utilised without the terminal-metal  $T_x$  being removed. Its strong coefficient of nonlinear absorption, amazing depth of modulation of even up to 50%, and bigger efficient nonlinear absorption coefficient compared to other 2D materials are the causes of this tight bandgap. Then, a discussion follows on  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  and other MXene synthesis as well as material characterisation.

The aqueous acid etching approach is often utilised for the synthesis of MXene, according to the study. Following that, these MXene or MAX phases were used as SAs on the fibre platform in all-fibre ring cavity configuration. Microfiber has been demonstrated in several shapes, including tapered fibre, D-shaped fibre, and etched fibre, which have superior heat dissipation mechanisms and a higher threshold of optical damage. These SA materials' nonlinear saturable absorption capabilities were then studied using either twin-detector or Z-scan measurement techniques. Based on these findings, the modulation depth and saturation intensity of each SA were determined. Finally, above mentioned SAs were inserted into the all-fibre laser cavity to give near-infrared passive mode-locking.

### Acknowledgement

This research work is funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia under Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2020/TK0/UTM/02/46).

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