# BOND STRENGTH BEHAVIOUR OF FLY ASH AND GROUND GRANULATED BLAST FURNACE SLAG OF GEOPOLYMER CONCRETE

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy

Razak Faculty of Technology and Informatics Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

DECEMBER 2020

## <span id="page-2-0"></span>**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my siblings and fellow friends, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

<span id="page-3-0"></span>In preparing this thesis, I was in contact with many people, researchers, academicians, and practitioners. They have contributed towards my understanding and thoughts. In particular, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my main thesis supervisor, Dr. Rahimah Muhamad, for encouragement, guidance, critics and friendship. I am also very thankful to my co-supervisor Dr. Kim Hung Mo for his guidance, advices and motivation. Without their continued support and interest, this thesis would not have been the same as presented here.

I am also indebted to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) for funding my MPhil study through GUP Tier 2 grant (Q.K130000.2540.20H40) with my main supervisor as the project leader. Librarians at UTM and University of Adelaide also deserve special thanks for their assistance in supplying the relevant literatures.

My fellow postgraduate student should also be recognised for their support. My sincere appreciation also extends to all my colleagues and others who have provided assistance at various occasions. Their views and tips are useful indeed. Unfortunately, it is not possible to list all of them in this limited space. I am very grateful to all of them, including my family member.

#### **ABSTRACT**

<span id="page-4-0"></span>As of recently, research on geopolymer concrete (GPC) is gaining popularity among construction practitioners and researchers due to its green materials in construction applications. Geopolymer is the result of a chemical reaction between source materials such as fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS), and alkaline liquid. It could fully replace Ordinary Portland cement (OPC) in the manufacturing of concrete products and thus reduce the negative impact of the carbon footprint  $(CO_2)$  on the environment. At present, most of the researches on GPC are mainly focused on the concrete design mix, mechanical properties and other related structural applications such as the cracking mode, flexural and shear behaviour and deflection of GPC. This study focuses on the bond strength behaviour of GPC, which is vital in predicting the cracking mode and behaviour. The main objective of this study is to evaluate parameters controlling the bond strength behaviour of GPC such as compressive strength, concrete cover-to-diameter (c/d) ratio and embedment length. Prior to the experiment, the design mix for the specimens was achieved on trial-and-error method by applying 0 %, 10 % and 20 % GGBFS on the fly ash-based GPC basis to obtain concrete grade of 20, 30 and 40 respectively with OPC as control specimens. All specimens were casted on 100 mm and 150 mm dimensional cube moulds and activated using sodium-based alkaline solution. Fly ash-based GPC specimens were heat cured (60  $^{\circ}$ C) for 24 hours whereas specimens partially replaced with GGBFS were ambient cured. For bond specimens, the c/d ratio was varied from 4.19 to 7.0 whereas 3.5d and 5.0d for embedment using bond breaker. Overall pull-out tests show that the normalised bond strength for GPC decreased as the concrete grade increased with GPC over OPC concrete. For c/d ratio, there was no significant effect on bond strength for both concrete as the ratio was increased more than 5.75. Specimens with higher embedment length also show reduction in bond strength. In order to further promote the use of environmentally friendly GPC in the construction industry, further structural assessment on the optimum bond strength of GPC needs to be carried out.

#### **ABSTRAK**

<span id="page-5-0"></span>Baru-baru ini, penyelidikan konkrit geopolimer (GPC) mendapat populariti dalam kalangan pengamal pembinaan dan penyelidik kerana bahan hijau yang terdapat padanya dalam aplikasi pembinaan. Geopolimer merupakan hasil reaksi antara bahan sumber seperti debu terbang dan sanga relau bagas berbutir tanah (GGBFS) dengan cecair alkali. Bahan ini boleh menjadi penggantian penuh bagi simen Portland biasa (OPC) untuk menghasilkan produk konkrit sekaligus mengurangkan impak negatif daripada jejak karbon  $(CO_2)$  terhadap alam sekitar. Pada masa kini, kebanyakan kajian menekankan campuran tereka bentuk, sifat mekanikal dan aplikasi struktur yang lain termasuklah mod retak, tingkah laku lentur dan ricih, dan juga pesongan untuk GPC. Kajian ini difokuskan kepada tingkah laku kekuatan ikatan GPC, yang penting dalam meramal mod dan tingkah laku retak. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menilai parameter mengawal tingkah laku kekuatan ikatan GPC seperti kekuatan mampat, nisbah penutup konkrit-diameter (c/d) dan panjang pembenaman. Berikutan itu, campuran tereka bentuk untuk spesimen dicapai berdasarkan kaedah percubaan dengan mengaplikasi 0 %, 10 % dan 20 % GGBFS kepada GPC berasaskan debu terbang untuk memperoleh gred konkrit, masing-masing 20, 30 dan 40 dengan konkrit OPC sebagai spesimen kawalan. Semua spesimen dituang ke dalam acuan kiub berdimensi 100 mm dan 150 mm dan diaktifkan menggunakan larutan alkali berasaskan natrium. Spesimen GPC berasaskan abu terbang diawet menggunakan haba (60°C) selama 24 jam, manakala spesimen menggunakan GGBFS sebagai pengganti separa diawet dalam suhu sekitar. Untuk spesimen ikatan, nisbah c/d divariasikan daripada 4.19 kepada 7.0 manakala 3.5d dan 5.0d untuk panjang pembenaman menggunakan pemecah ikatan. Keputusan keseluruhan ujian tarik-keluar menunjukkan kekuatan ikatan ternormal bagi keduadua konkrit G30 menurun selepas gred konkrit ditingkatkan dengan GPC mengatasi konkrit OPC. Untuk nisbah c/d, tiada kesan signifikan pada kekuatan ikatan untuk kedua-dua konkrit selepas nisbah tersebut ditingkatkan melebihi 5.75. Spesimen dengan panjang pembenaman yang tinggi juga menunjukkan pengurangan dalam kekuatan ikatan. Untuk menggalakkan penggunaan GPC yang mesra alam dalam industri pembinaan, lanjutan penilaian struktur terhadap kekuatan ikatan optimum menggunakan GPC perlu dijalankan.

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#### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

Development of civil infrastructures including multi-storey buildings, road, bridges, retaining wall and underground structures are synonym with the reinforced concrete (RC) as one of the most widely utilized composite materials (Maranan, 2016). In designing and analysing RC members, knowledge of bond between reinforcement and its concrete surrounding is crucial since it could affect flexural behaviour as well as the shear capacity of the members (Visintin *et al.*, 2013). Also termed as bond behaviour, the concrete structure consisted of tensile stress transferred from steel-to-concrete by interfacial interaction. The mechanism is important not only to govern the formation of cracks and crack width but also for many other vital issues related to structural application such as anchorage capacity, minimum development length and lap splice length of the reinforcements (Visintin *et al*., 2013; Orangun *et al*., 1977).

When reinforcement is embedded in concrete and tested in tension, concrete cracks due to the failure of chemical adhesion that has been formed during hardening of concrete. Thus, adequate bonding between concrete and steel is essential to ensure the effective composite action of the RC section (Selby, 2012). Research on bond strength in RC components was widened into various structural applications including the tension stiffening and deflection through experimental, analytical and even numerical methods (Visintin *et al*., 2013). Recently, the structural applications utilized various by-products such as fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) as alternative sources of binder to produce geopolymer concrete (GPC), and could be potentially used as construction materials (Albitar *et al*., 2018; Ma *et al*., 2018).

The fundamental studies on structural applications, bond behaviour, still needs further investigation for GPC utilizing both by-products due to limited knowledge on the material properties of the materials. Plus, knowledge on its mechanism needs to be well-understood as it is the critical factor governing the bond performance of RC components. It includes the parameters such as compressive strength, concrete cover-to-diameter (c/d) ratio and embedment length that could effect on the bond strength of GPC (Zhao *et al*., 2016). Thus, this study will apply fly ash and GGBFS as the by-products to investigate the bond strength behaviour for GPC in terms of material properties thus propose the utilization of this green concrete to be used in construction applications.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Ordinary Portland cement (OPC) as conventional concrete in RC structure is well-known for its excessive carbon footprint to the environment (Razi *et al*., 2016). Each tonne of cement production releases approximately one tonne of carbon dioxide  $(CO<sub>2</sub>)$  to the surrounding environment. Annually, around 5 % to 7 % of worldwide's CO<sup>2</sup> emission was contributed by the cement industry (Alnahhal *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, cement manufacturing is a resource-intensive and energy-intensive process (Olivier *et al*., 2012). Currently, researchers are aiming to develop more effective alternatives, including replacement of Ordinary Portland cement (OPC) with geopolymer concrete (GPC) (Muttashar *et al*., 2014).

Also, there is a massive amount of Class F fly ash production from energy generation, which requires an enormous amount of space for its disposal (Islam *et al*., 2015). Class F fly ash is more preferred compared to Class C fly ash due to its higher workability and ease of handling as construction materials (Chou *et al*., 2009). However, there are some issues associated with the utilization of the fly ash-based GPC including low early strength development as well as inclusion of high temperature curing which requires higher energy consumption (Nath and Sarker, 2014). To improve such issues, ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) could be suggested as partial replacement of the GPC (Fang *et al*., 2018).

Many studies have been carried out to investigate bond strength between concrete and reinforcement that could contribute to the ultimate bond stress and slip for conventional concrete (Ganesan *et al*., 2015; Ma *et al*., 2018; Mendis and French, 2000; Mo *et al*., 2016; Tekle *et al*., 2016; Vinothini *et al*., 2015). However, the studies are not considered extensive for GPC in terms of parameters affecting the bond strength, thus need additional studies on its material properties as well as bond behaviour. Utilization of the by-products as replacement for conventional concrete could be ideal to investigate the bond behaviour of fly ash and GGBFS-based GPC (Fang *et al*., 2018).

Despite safer design basis for engineers in dealing with splitting failures and improved prediction of cracking behaviour for RC members, the experimental works on bond behaviour utilizing the GPC still need further investigation. Thus, the utilization of Class F fly ash and GGBFS could be the most ideal by-products to investigate the material properties as well as bond strength of GPC. Therefore, this strongly indicates important gaps to be fulfilled in proposing utilization of GPC for future research as sustainable concrete in construction applications.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the research are:

- (a) To identify compressive strength, concrete cover-to-diameter (c/d) ratio and embedment length as the parameters controlling bond strength between GPC and embedded reinforcement.
- (b) To evaluate the bond strength for GPC made up of Class F fly ash and GGBFS embedded with reinforcement based on the parameters identified.
- (c) To propose utilization of Class F fly ash and GGBFS as GPC for further structural applications.

#### **1.4 Scope of Research**

In this study, Class F fly ash is the main binder in GPC with GGBFS as the partial replacement. Unlike OPC as the well-established materials, fly ash needed to undergo chemical analysis for identification of either Class F or Class C fly ash. For current study, the analysis includes X-ray fluorescent (XRF) analysis for the identification as well as comparison with previous studies. Then, GGBFS were added in percentage of 0 %, 10 % and 15 % as fly ash replacement in GPC.

Trial-and-error design mixture is performed to obtain a suitable design mixture based on compressive test, splitting tensile test as well as slump test, subjected to bond test. For bond behaviour, the bond test that was conducted is pullout test. OPC concrete as control specimens is fabricated with GPC as comparison purpose. All tests were conducted for 7 days curing ages. The specimens were casted into either 100 mm-dimensional or 150mm-dimensional cube mould and cured at ambient temperature, except for fly ash-based GPC that requires heat curing.

#### **1.5 Significance of Study**

The utilization of Class F fly ash and GGBFS as the main binder in GPC could be as effective as conventional concrete in structural application. For instance, in terms of bond strength, some of previous studies suggested that both concretes are comparable to each other despite differences in material properties (Castel and Foster, 2015; Sofi *et al*., 2007; Junaid *et al*., 2015; Tekle *et al*., 2016). Other than the structural aspects, sustainability, efficiency and productivity of utilization for byproducts should also be taken into consideration in order to produce a more sustainable environment by reducing the utilization of conventional concrete (Razi *et al*., 2016). Class F fly ash and GGBFS were well-known as the main by-products to manufacture GPC and could be promoted to replace the conventional concrete in the future (Fang *et al*., 2018; Sani *et al*., 2020).

Inclusion of GGBFS could be helpful in attaining a higher compressive strength since Class F fly ash could not achieve a high compressive strength at an early age. Plus, compressive strength portrays the material properties of GPC in which eventually affect the bond strength (Al-Azzawi *et al*., 2018). Other than compressive strength, bond strength prediction of GPC governed by c/d ratio and embedment length could be developed. The experimental bond strength based on all the parameters could suggest optimum bond strength as a safe design value to be proposed, especially for different type of materials as relative comparison (Orangun *et al*., 1977).

This study will also provide experimental investigation of bond strength to represent bond-slip behaviour by carrying out pull-out tests utilizing GPC to propose the utilization of this green cement as construction materials. Upon its completion, the results will be compared with control specimens and previous bond strength equations to give predictions on the optimum bond strength with the parameters involved. The experimental analysis could assist designers to propose an equation as a guideline for further structural application, especially when it comes to nonestablished materials such as Class F fly ash and GGBFS. Also, this study could be a benchmark for extension studies of tension stiffening and deflection behaviour of GPC in structural application (Visintin *et al*., 2013).

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**Appendix A Photos of Research Materials and Process** 



Figure A1 Collected Class F fly ash sample



Figure A2 Collected GGBFS sample



Figure A3 Collected OPC sample



Figure A4 Sodium hydroxide flakes supplied by BTScience Sdn. Bhd.



Figure A5 Sodium silicate gel supplied by BTScience Sdn. Bhd.



Figure A6 Alkaline solution with 14 M concentration



Figure A7 Sikadur-30 used to prepare the bond breaker



Figure A8 Bond breaker prepared for pull-out specimens



Figure A9 Universal Testing Machine for compressive and splitting tensile test



Figure A10 Universal Testing Machine for steel tensile test



Figure A11 Universal Testing Machine for pull-out test



Figure A12 Linear Variable Displacement Transducer (LVDT)



Figure A13 Materials to manufacture GPC specimens



Figure A14 56-L capacity pan mixer



Figure A15 Workability test for GPC



Figure A16 Poker vibrator used to compact the fresh GPC



Figure A17 Dry oven curing for GPC



Figure A18 GPC specimens after heat cured and de-moulded



Figure A19 In-situ casting for 100 mm dimensional pull-out specimen



Figure A20 In-situ casting for 150 mm dimensional pull-out specimen



Figure A21 Pull-out specimen after de-moulding (a) 100 mm dimensional



Figure A22 Pull-out specimen after de-moulding (a) 100 mm dimensional



Figure A23 Experimental compressive strength test setting



Figure A24 Experimental splitting tensile test setting



Figure A25 Experimental pull-out test setting



Figure A26 Gypsum applied before pull-out test



Figure A27 Fly ash and GGBFS collection form



(a)  $(b)$  (c)

Figure A28 G-TF-100-10-3.5d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % GGBFS



Figure A29 G-TF-100-10-5.0d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A30 G-TF-150-10-3.5d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % GGBFS



Figure A31 G-TF-150-10-5.0d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A32 G-TF-150-12-3.5d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A33 G-TF-150-12-5.0d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A34 G-TF-150-16-3.5d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A35 G-TF-150-16-5.0d (a) 0 % GGBFS (b) 10 % GGBFS (c) 20 % **GGBFS** 



Figure A36 (a) O-100-10-3.5d-OPC (b) O-100-10-5.0d-OPC (c) O-150-10-3.5d-OPC (d) O-150-10-5.0d-OPC



Figure A37 (a) O-150-12-3.5d-OPC (b) O-150-12-5.0d-OPC (c) O-150-16-3.5d-OPC (d) O-150-16-5.0d-OPC



## **Appendix B Tensile Data for Steel Bar**

Figure B1 Tensile test result for 10 mm diameter



Figure B2 Tensile test result for 12 mm diameter



Figure B3 Tensile test result for 16 mm diameter

## **Appendix C Certificate of Calibration**











Figure C3 Certificate of calibration for compression machine (page 1)



in a

Figure C4 Certificate of calibration for compression machine (page 2)

## **Appendix D Calculation for Bond Strength**

#### **Sample Calculation of Bond Strength**

Given specimens: **G-150-10-3.5d-10%**

Parameters involved: Compressive strength, c/d ratio and embedment length

**c/d ratio: Compressive strength,**  $f'_c$ : 36.8 MPa (from same batch of pull-out specimens)

$$
\frac{150 - 10}{2} = 45
$$
  

$$
\frac{45}{10} = 4.5
$$

**Embedment length,** *L* **:**  $3.5 \times d = 35$ 

**Bond strength,** *τ<sup>u</sup>* **:**

$$
\tau_u = \frac{P}{\pi dL}
$$

**Maximum load applied,** *P* **: 13.30361 kN** 

**Area,**  $\pi dL$  **:**  $\pi$  x 10 x 35 = 1099.557429 mm<sup>2</sup>

**Bond strength,**  $\tau_u$  **:** 

 $\mathbf{1}$  $\mathbf{1}$ 

 $12.0990588 \approx 12.10 MPa$ 

## **Sample Calculation of Bond Strength**

## Given specimens: **G-150-10-3.5d-10%**

Parameters involved: Compressive strength, c/d ratio and embedment length

**c/d ratio: Compressive strength,** *f'c***:** 36.8 MPa (from same batch of pull-out specimens)





1.99

## **LIST OF PUBLICATIONS**

## **Indexed Conference Proceedings**

**1. Sani, M. A**., Muhamad, R. & Mo, K. H. (2020). Effect of Ground Granulated Blast Furnace Slag as Partial Replacement in Fly Ash-Based Geopolymer Concrete. In *IOP Conference Series:Materials Science and Engineering*, 712, pp. 012002. IOP Publishing. http://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/712/1/01200.