

MECHANICAL PROPERTIES OF GLASS FIBRE REINFORCED CONCRETE
WITH PALM OIL FUEL ASH

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Specially dedicated to
my supervisor Associate Professor Dr. A.S.M. Abdul Awal, my family and friends.

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ABSTRACT

In the absence of steel reinforcement, the brittle nature of conventional concrete always results in catastrophic failure without warning. Researches since decades ago shown that the addition of fibres into the concrete enhanced its ductility while admixtures help to strengthen the cement matrix. To study the effects of palm oil fuel ash (POFA) on the mechanical properties of glass fibre reinforced concrete (GFRC), an experimental programme involved Vebe consistency test, ultrasonic pulse velocity test, compressive strength test, splitting tensile strength test and flexural strength test was carried out. Normal concrete and GFRC with 0, 10, 20 and 30% of POFA were prepared and tested at the age of 1, 7, 28 and 90 days. The glass fibre used was 12mm Cem-Fil Alkali-Resistant (AR) glass fibre added into the concrete at a percentage of 0.5 by volume of concrete. The result shows that the addition of glass fibres reduced the workability of the concrete but the use of superplasticiser helped to compensate the loss. In term of mechanical properties, glass fibres reduced the compressive strength of the concrete for about 10.0% but 20% replacement of cement with POFA gave a 5.4% improvement to the compressive strength at later age. With the incorporation of glass fibres into the concrete, the splitting tensile strength and flexural strength were increased by 2.2% and 20.0% respectively. The replacement of 20% cement with POFA further enhance the concrete for another 8.2% and 10.6% of splitting tensile and flexural strength respectively. In conclusion, glass fibres reduced the compressive strength of the concrete but it helped in improving the splitting tensile and flexural strength of the concrete. To strengthen the concrete, 20% replacement of cement with POFA was found to be the optimum value.

ABSTRAK

Konkrit merupakan suatu bahan pembinaan bersifat rapuh yang melibatkan kegagalan struktur secara tiba-tiba sekiranya tidak diperkuatkan dengan batang keluli. Para penyelidik telah membuktikan bahawa sifat kemuluran konkrit juga boleh diperkuatkan dengan gegentian manakala bahan tambahan mineral dapat menguatkan matriks simen. Untuk menguji kesan abu bakaran kelapa sawit (POFA) ke atas kekuatan mekanikal konkrit dengan gegentian gelas (GFRC), suatu kajian yang melibatkan ujian konsisten Vebe, ujian kelajuan nadi ultrasonik, ujian kekuatan mampatan, kekuatan tegangan pembelahan dan kekuatan lenturan telah dilaksanakan. Konkrit biasa dan GFRC dengan 0, 10, 20 dan 30% abu bakaran kelapa sawit telah disediakan dan diuji pada usia 1, 7, 28 dan 90 hari. Gegentian gelas tahan alkali Cem-Fil 12mm ditambahkan ke dalam konkrit pada bilangan 0.5% daripada isipadu konkrit. Hasil kajian membuktikan bahawa gegentian gelas menurunkan kebolehkeraan konkrit tetapi superplasticiser dapat memperbaiki kebolehkeraan konkrit. Selain itu, gegentian gelas juga mengurangkan kekuatan mampatan konkrit sebanyak 10% tetapi penggantian 20% simen dengan POFA berjaya memulihkan kekuatan mampatan konkrit sebanyak 5.4% pada usia 90 hari. Dengan tambahan gegentian gelas, kekuatan tegangan pembelahan dan kekuatan lenturan konkrit telah dinaikkan sebanyak 2.2% dan 20% masing-masing. Penggantian 20% simen dengan POFA pula masing-masing menaikkan lagi kekuatan tegangan pembelahan dan kekuatan lenturan konkrit sebanyak 8.2% and 10.6%. Kesimpulannya, gegentian gelas mengurangkan kekuatan mampatan konkrit tetapi menambahbaikkan kekuatan tegangan pembelahan dan kekuatan lenturan konkrit. Penggantian 20% simen dengan POFA merupakan kuantiti optimum yang dicadangkan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	xi
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xvi
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
	LIST OF EQUATION	xviii
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xix
1	INTRODUCTION	
	1.1 Background of Research	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	2
	1.3 Aim and Objectives of Research	3
	1.4 Scope of Research	3
	1.5 Significance of Study	4

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	3.2.1 Cement	47
	3.2.2 Aggregates	47
	3.2.3 Glass Fibres	48
	3.2.4 Admixtures	49
3.3	Mix Design and Sample Preparation	51
	3.3.1 Mix Design Method	51
	3.3.2 Preparation of Specimens	52
3.4	Laboratory Testing	53
	3.4.1 Trial Test	53
	3.4.2 Experimental Programme	54
3.5	Types of Testing	55
	3.5.1 Fresh Properties	55
	3.5.1.1 Vebe Consistency Test	56
	3.5.1.2 Bleeding and Segregation	56
	3.5.2 Hardened Properties	57
	3.5.2.1 Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity Test	57
	3.5.2.2 Compressive Strength Test	58
	3.5.2.3 Splitting Tensile Strength Test	59
	3.5.2.4 Flexural Strength Test	60
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
	4.1 Introduction	62
	4.2 Trial Test	62
	4.2.1 Workability	63
	4.2.2 Compressive Strength	64
	4.2.3 Splitting Tensile Strength	65
	4.2.4 Selection of Volume Fraction of Glass Fibres	66
	4.3 Experimental Programme	67
	4.3.1 Density and Workability	67
	4.3.2 Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity	68

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	4.3.3 Compressive Strength	70
	4.3.4 Splitting Tensile Strength	75
	4.3.5 Flexural Strength	80
5	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	5.1 Conclusion	83
	5.2 Recommendations	84
	REFERENCES	86
	APPENDICES	90

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Characteristics of Cem-Fil AR-glass fibres	7
2.2	Properties of Cem-Fil AR-glass fibres	7
2.3	Comparison of properties of AR glass fibres	8
2.4	Typical mechanical properties of Cem-Fil glass fibre reinforced concrete	8
2.5	Properties of fresh cement paste	11
2.6	Percentage increase of compressive, flexural, splitting tensile strength and rapid chloride permeability test (RPCT) value of glass fibre concrete in comparison with different grades of ordinary concrete mixes	15
2.7	Flexural loading test results For various fibre concrete at 28 days	20
2.8	GRC strength at 5 years relative to 28 day value	25
2.9	Approximate chemical characteristics of various cementitious materials	29
2.10	Approximate physical characteristics of various cementitious materials	30
2.11	Porosity of rice husk ash replaced concrete at various percentages	39
2.12	Chloride diffusivity of rice husk ash replaced concrete	39
2.13	Compressive strength of rice husk ash replaced concrete after 7, 14 and 28days of curing	40
2.14	Compressive strength of cement pastes	41
3.1	Chemical composition of Portland cement and ground POFA	50
3.2	Characteristic of various concrete mixes	54

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
4.1	Density and Vebe time of different concrete mixtures	67
4.2	Ultrasonic pulse velocity of various concrete mixes	69
4.3	Compressive strength of various concrete mixes	71
4.4	Splitting tensile strength of various concrete mixes	76
4.5	Flexural strength of various concrete mixes	80

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Effects of fibre content and fibre length on mini slump test	11
2.2	Compressive strength test result of standard concrete mixture K	14
2.3	Effects of fibre content on the compressive strength of highly flowable concrete	15
2.4	Effects of fibre content on the tensile strength of highly flowable concrete	17
2.5	Flexural strength test result	19
2.6	Effects of fibre content on the bending strength of highly flowable concrete	20
2.7	Double restrained slab cracking test result	22
2.8	SEM view of fibre pull out of un-aged glass fibre reinforced concrete	23
2.9	Cracks running straight across the glass fibres	23
2.10	Cracks were shifted before advancing over the glass fibres	24
2.11	Hydration products filling the spaces between filaments	26
2.12	Failure of CemFil-1 strand in OPC matrix after aging in water at 20°C for one year	26
2.13	Fly ash	31
2.14	Microscopic view of fly ash	31
2.15	Plot of compressive strength result at various ages of the mixes with different fly ash contents	33
2.16	Effects of glass fibres volume fraction on restraint of expansion of paste	34
2.17	Blast furnace kiln	34

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.18	Ground granulated blast-furnace slag	34
2.19	Silicon industry	35
2.20	Silica fume	35
2.21	28 Days cube compressive strength vs % of fibres	36
2.22	28 Days splitting tensile strength Vs % of fibres	37
2.23	Comparison of compressive strengths of mortars prepared with 15% pozzolan and 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, and 25% silica fume	38
2.24	Rice husk ash	38
2.25	Burnt rice husk ash	38
2.26	Oil palm	40
2.27	Palm oil fuel ash	40
2.28	Compressive strength of concrete	41
3.1	Cement type CEM II/B-M 32, 5 R	47
3.2	Alkaline resistant glass fibres	48
3.3	Ground palm oil fuel ash	49
3.4	Los Angeles abrasion machine	50
3.5	Superplasticizer RHEOBULD 1100	51
3.6	Mechanical pan mixer	52
3.7	Casting and hardening of cubic specimens	53
3.8	Compressive strength test	58
3.9	Splitting tensile strength test	59
3.10	Flexural strength test	61
4.1	Vebe time vs percentage of glass fibres	63
4.2	Compressive strength vs percentage of glass fibres	65
4.3	Splitting tensile strength vs percentage of glass fibres	66
4.4	UPV vs type of concrete	70
4.5	Compressive strength vs age of concrete	71
4.6	Compressive strength vs type of concrete	72
4.7	Failure of plain concrete cube under compression	73

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
4.8	Failure of glass fibre concrete cube under compression	73
4.9	Fibre pull-out on fractured surface	74
4.10	Splitting tensile strength vs age of concrete	76
4.11	Splitting tensile strength vs type of concrete	77
4.12	Failure of glass fibre concrete (GC) cylinder under splitting tensile force	78
4.13	Failure of glass fibre concrete with 20% of POFA (PGC 20) under splitting tensile force	79
4.14	Fracture surface of glass fibre concrete cylinder with 20% of POFA (PGC 20)	79
4.15	Peak flexural strength vs type of concrete	80
4.16	Fractured surface of PGC 20 prism under flexural strength test	82
4.17	Catastrophic failure of GC prism	82

LIST OF SYMBOLS

V	-	Ultrasonic pulse velocity
s	-	Distance between centers of transducer faces (travelled by ultrasonic pulse)
t	-	Transit time of ultrasonic pulse
T	-	Splitting tensile strength
P	-	Maximum load applied
l	-	Length of cylindrical specimen
D	-	Diameter of specimen
L	-	Prism span length
b	-	Average width of specimen
d	-	Average depth of specimen

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARGF	-	Alkaline resistant glass fibres
FRC	-	Fibre reinforced concrete
GFRC, GC	-	Glass fibre reinforced concrete
GGBFS	-	Ground granulated blast-furnace slag
PC	-	Plain concrete
PFA	-	Pelverised fly ash
PGC 10	-	Glass fibre reinforced concrete with 10% palm oil fuel ash
PGC 20	-	Glass fibre reinforced concrete with 20% palm oil fuel ash
PGC 30	-	Glass fibre reinforced concrete with 30% palm oil fuel ash
POFA	-	Palm oil fuel ash
RHA	-	Rice husk ash
SPGC 20	-	Glass fibre reinforced concrete with 20% palm oil fuel ash and superplasticiser
SCC	-	Self-compacting concrete

LIST OF EQUATIONS

EQUATION NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1	Ultrasonic pulse velocity	57
2	Splitting tensile strength	59
3	Flexural strength	60

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A1	Amount of glass fibres	90
A2	Amount of superplasticiser	91
A3	Amount of POFA	91
A4	Ultrasonic pulse velocity	92
A5	Splitting tensile strength	92
A6	Flexural strength	93
B	Concrete mix design (DOE method)	94

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Concrete is by far the most commonly used material in construction sector due to its superior load bearing capacity and flexibility to be modified with different properties. However, its brittle nature always results in catastrophic failure which involves total collapse of the structure in a short time. With regard to this, reinforcement is needed. Besides the conventional way of tensile strengthening using steel reinforcement bars, fibre reinforced concrete (FRC) was introduced since decades ago. The idea was to disperse fibres into the concrete to improve the tensile strength of the concrete.

The randomly distributed fibres in the concrete play the role of redistributing the tensile force applied on it and interrupt the propagation of cracks hence enhances its post-cracking ductility. With this mechanism, the failure of the concrete becomes ductile and catastrophic failure can be prevented. However, fibre reinforced concrete is not meant for heavy loading application. This is mainly because of its inferiority in term of improving the strength of concrete as compared to conventional steel reinforcement bars.

Many types of fibres are available in the concrete industry nowadays, for instant, steel fibres, synthetic fibres such as carbon fibres and polypropylene fibres, glass fibres as well as natural fibres. Each type of fibres has their own advantages and drawbacks. The selection is mainly based on the application of the concrete. For example, steel fibres and carbon fibres are high in tensile strength, therefore they are commonly used in structural components. Glass fibres and natural fibres on the other hand are favoured for their lightweight.

The inclusion of glass fibres in concrete was initially not encouraged because the byproducts (calcium hydroxide) from the hydration of cement will create an alkaline environment which weakens the bonding between glass fibres and cement matrix through chemical attack [1]. To overcome this problem, alkali-resistant glass fibres were used. The protective zirconia layer on the glass fibres helps to mitigate the intrusion of chemical substances and slow down the rate of etching of the surface of glass fibres.

One major problem with glass fibre reinforced concrete is debonding between the fibres and concrete. The weak interfacial bonding between the fibres and cement matrix always results in the failure of concrete. So, it is important to have a strong concrete matrix. To achieve this, mineral admixtures such as fly ash, granulated blast-furnace slag, silica fume, metakaolin, rice husk ash and palm oil fuel ash can be used. These materials contain high amount of silicate which contributes to the development of the ultimate strength of the concrete.

1.2 Problem Statement

Mineral admixtures such as fly ash, granulated blast-furnace-slag, silica fume, metakaolin and rice husk ash are beneficial to the improvement of the mechanical

properties of concrete [2]. POFA, being another widely available mineral admixture in Malaysia were also proved to be capable of improving the strength of concrete [3, 4]. However, study on the use of POFA in glass fibre reinforced concrete (GFRC) is still scarce. Having similar properties as other pozzolanic materials, it is believed that POFA is capable of enhancing the mechanical properties of glass fibre reinforced concrete. To look into this aspect, this research was conducted.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of Research

The aim of this research is to study the effects of POFA on the mechanical properties of glass fibre reinforced concrete. The objectives are listed as the following:

- i. To compare the mechanical properties of GFRC with and without POFA.
- ii. To check the possibility of improving the mechanical properties of GFRC by using POFA.
- iii. To know the effects of glass fibre towards flexural strength of concrete.

1.4 Scope of Research

This study focuses on comparing the effects of POFA on the mechanical properties of GFRC. Among the many factors that govern the properties of GFRC, some of them were held constant. In this research, one a single type and dimension of glass fibres was used. Besides that, the type and content of the coarse and fine aggregates used were also remained constant for all the specimens.

Since the effects of fibre's volume and water/cement ratio are significant, trial mixes were performed to obtain the optimum fibre and moisture content to be used in the actual testing. For the trial mix specimens, compressive strength test and splitting tensile strength test were carried on the cubes that had been wet-cured for 7 days. The result obtained from the trial mixes was then used in the actual testing.

To check the possibility of POFA in enhancing the mechanical properties of GFRC, compressive test, splitting tensile test and flexural test were performed on the specimens at the age of 1 day, 7 days, 28 days and 90 days. Adding up to that, non-destructive test and testing on the workability of fresh concrete were also been carried out.

1.5 Significance of Study

Palm oil fuel ash is a waste material that can be found abundantly in Malaysia. It is a byproduct from burning palm oil shells and fiber in thermal power plant or palm oil mills. If not disposed properly, it will affect the environment and the health of human negatively. If the contribution of POFA to the development of mechanical strength of glass fibre reinforced concrete is found to be satisfactory, there will be an additional use of POFA in this sector. With the additional usage of POFA, the disposal of industrial waste materials to the environment can be reduced. Besides that, with the replacement of cement using POFA, the pollution due to the emission of carbon dioxide from the production of cement clinker can be improved.

The impacts of this study are remarkable especially in the current trend where fibre reinforce concrete emerge to be a popular construction material and environmental issue concerns everyone in society.

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