

DELIGNIFICATION OF PINEAPPLE PEEL WASTE BY SODIUM
HYDROXIDE PRE-TREATMENT

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To my lovely parent, who gave me endless love, trust, constant encouragement over the years and, for her prayers.

To my friends, for being very understanding and supportive in keeping me going, enduring ups and down during the completion of this thesis.

This dissertation is dedicated to them.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture-based economies have caused the amount of lignocellulosic biomass wastes to be gradually increasing. It has been a major concern to all nations on the disposal method because it can cause major environmental problems. One of the largest agriculture residues contributing to this issue is pineapple waste. Pineapple waste especially the peels are the major by-product obtained during pineapple processing which contribute about 20 - 40 % of the total weight of the fruit. Since, pineapple peels rich in cellulose, it has huge potential use as substrate to develop into valuable bio-based materials. However, pre-treatment is required to overcome the complex structure of lignocellulosic biomass and make it accessible for enzymatic and microbial hydrolysis. In this study, chemical pre-treatment method was performed using alkaline solution, sodium hydroxide (NaOH) on pineapple peels waste. The first stage was the evaluation of the influence of NaOH concentration, temperature and retention time on degradation of lignin content using design of experiment, Box-Behnken and response surface methodology. Based from the Design-Expert software, the maximum lignin degradation was 55.5 % with the pre-treatment performed at 3 % NaOH concentration, 35.3 °C with 120 hr exposure time. The second stage of the study was evaluating the delignification kinetic. Kinetic data of the pre-treatment were evaluated at different temperatures (20 °C, 30 °C and 40 °C) at constant NaOH concentration, 3 % for 120 hr. Delignification by NaOH pre-treatment was possible at all levels of temperature in the bulk phase, however, results were more significant at temperatures 30 °C. The kinetic constant at 20 °C, 30 °C and 40 °C were 0.0093 h⁻¹, 0.1467 h⁻¹ and 0.1649 h⁻¹ respectively and the activation energy was 21.63 kJ/mol. The delignification was highly dependent on temperature and duration of pre-treatment.

ABSTRAK

Ekonomi berasaskan pertanian menyebabkan jumlah sisa biojisim lignoselulosik meningkat secara beransur-ansur. Ia menjadi kebimbangan utama kepada semua negara mengenai kaedah pelupusan sisa tersebut kerana ia boleh menyebabkan pencemaran kepada alam sekitar. Salah satu daripada residu pertanian terbesar yang menyumbang kepada isu ini ialah sisa nanas. Sisa nanas terutamanya kulit adalah produk sampingan utama yang diperoleh semasa pemrosesan pengeluaran nanas yang kira-kira 20 - 40 % daripada jumlah berat buah. Namun demikian, kulit nanas yang kaya dengan selulosa, hemiselulosa, gula dan karbohidrat lain menyebabkan ia mempunyai potensi besar yang boleh digunakan sebagai substrat untuk menghasilkan bahan yang berasaskan biologi yang lain. Walau bagaimanapun, pra-rawatan diperlukan untuk mengatasi struktur kompleks lignoselulosik tersebut supaya dapat dihidrolisis oleh enzim dan mikroorganism. Dalam kajian ini, kaedah pra-rawatan kimia digunakan iaitu natrium hidroksida (NaOH) pada sisa kulit nanas. Peringkat pertama adalah penilaian pengaruh kepekatan NaOH, suhu dan masa pengekalan terhadap penyingkiran lignin menggunakan reka bentuk uji kaji, *Box-Behnken and response surface methodology*. Penyingkiran lignin maksimum adalah 56.3 % dengan pra-rawatan dilakukan pada kepekatan NaOH 3 %, 30 °C dengan masa pendedahan 120 jam. Peringkat kedua kajian adalah *delignification kinetics*. Data kinetik pra-rawatan dinilai pada suhu yang berbeza (20 °C, 30 °C dan 40 °C) pada kepekatan NaOH tetap, 3 % selama 120 jam. Keputusan lebih ketara pada suhu 30 °C. Pemalar kinetik pada 20 °C, 30 °C dan 40 °C masing-masing 0.0093 h⁻¹, 0.1467 h⁻¹ dan 0.1649 h⁻¹ dan tenaga pengaktifan yang diperlukan untuk memulakan tindak balas adalah 21.63 kJ / mol. Proses delignifikasi sangat dipengaruhi oleh suhu and masa pengekalan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

H_2SO_4	-	Sulphuric acid
NaOH	-	Sodium hydroxide
Hr	-	Hours
Min	-	Minute
CO	-	Carbon monoxide
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
H ₂	-	Hydrogen
SO ₂	-	Sulphur dioxide
ClO ₂	-	Chlorine dioxide
NO ₂	-	Nitrogen dioxide
H ₂ O ₂	-	Hydrogen peroxide
NH ₃	-	Ammonia
(NH ₄) ₂ SO ₃	-	Ammonium sulphite
HCl	-	Hydrochloric acid
H ₃ PO ₄	-	Phosphoric acid
O ₃	-	Ozone
CH ₃ COOH	-	Acetic acid
KOH	-	Potassium hydroxide
Ca(OH) ₂	-	Calcium hydroxide
NH ₃ ·H ₂ O	-	Aqueous ammonia
C ₄ H ₄ O ₄	-	Maleic or fumaric acid
C ₂ H ₂ O ₄	-	Oxalic acid
HMF	-	hydroxymethylfurfural
MPIB	-	Malaysian Pineapple Industry Board
TAPPI	-	Technical Association of Pulp and Institute's
AFEX	-	Steam explosion, ammonia fibre explosion

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RSM	-	Response Surface Methodology.
ml	-	Mililitre
g	-	Gram
w/v	-	Weight over volume
%	-	Percentage
°C	-	Degree celcius
s	-	Seconds

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Lignocelluloses biomass is the most promising feedstock as it produces naturally, inexpensive, abundant and renewable resources. The biomass is mainly consisting three components such as cellulose, hemicelluloses and lignin. Cellulose consists of long chained glucose subunits that linked together by 1, 4-glycosidic bonds (Lee, Hamid, & Zain, 2014). Hemicellulose is polymers consist of glucose units which contain different type of sugars. But, sugar units in hemicellulose are smaller and branched polymers compare to cellulose. Lignin is a more complex polymer compare to other components in biomass. The polymers cross linked chains that formed with phenylpropane units serves as a protective layer. All the three components are covalent cross-linkages that make biomass a complex composite material (Amin *et al.*, 2017).

Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) wastes are one of the largest amount lignocellulosic feedstock waste produced throughout the world (Hajar *et al.*, 2012; Tropea *et al.*, 2014). The worldwide production of pineapple is 16 million tons in 2005 and is exported in its fresh or processed form such as canned pineapple,

pineapple pulp and juice. Among the leading producer of pineapple are China, India, Thailand, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya and Nigeria. In Malaysia, pineapple industry is relatively small compared to other agro-based export oriented industry such as palm oil and rubber, however it play an important role in developing the country's socio-economic (Ong, Tan, & Liew, 2014). In Malaysia, 412, 720 metric tons of pineapple based products was produced in 2015 and currently world's 18th largest pineapple producer. By the year of 2020, the intensification of Malaysia's pineapple plantation parallel with 11th Malaysia Plan is forecasted to contribute in larger pineapple production among other leading producer of pineapple (Ruekeith, 2015).

Pineapple peels which are rich in intracellular sugars have great potential to be converted into different valuable products such as bio-fuels, bio-energy, fine chemicals, energy source for microbial fermentation and enzyme production (Anwar, Gulfranz, & Irshad, 2014; Tropea *et al.*, 2014). However, the pineapple peels has limitation for utilization due to cellulose, hemicelluloses and lignin are tightly associated with each other and makes the biomass less accessible for microorganisms or enzyme digestion. Therefore, pre-treatment is an important tool in order to break down the structure for better enzyme accessibility before the raw material can be used for bioconversion to produce value added products. During pre-treatment process, the compact structure of the biomass will be disrupted by breaking down the lignin structure, decreases the crystallinity of cellulose and degrade hemicelluloses to sugar monomers. Eventually, it makes cellulose fibre more exposed for the enzymes and microorganism to access and hydrolyses the cellulose to convert the carbohydrate polymers into fermentable sugars (Amin *et al.*, 2017).

There are several methods of pre-treatment that were used to the disrupt complex structure of lignocellulosic biomass such as mechanical, physicochemical, chemical and biological pre-treatments. Among the various treatment methods, chemical pre-treatment using alkaline solution pre-treatment is widely studied. Alkaline pre-treatment using sodium hydroxide, NaOH is proven as cost effective, less amount of energy and non-hazardous chemical process. The major advantage

of NaOH pre-treatment is efficient breakdown of lignin from the biomass without any momentous loss of structural carbohydrate materials such as glucose, xylose, arabinose and so on from different types of lignocellulosic biomass like sugarcane bagasse, switch grass and corn stover from previous studies (Amin *et al.*, 2017; Chen, Stevens, Zhu, Holmes & Xu, 2013; Kumar, Barrett, Delwiche & Stroeve, 2009). Therefore, NaOH pretreatment is a promising pre-treatment option for both types of woody and non-woody types of lignocellulosic biomass. In this study, pineapple peels waste was used as the biomass to determine the influence of NaOH concentration, temperature and retention time in lignin removal using Response Surface Methodology (RSM) and delignification kinetics.

1.2 Problem Statement

The worldwide production of lignocellulosic biomass waste is estimated about 1.3×10^{10} metric tons per annum. It is predicted that biomass generation to be increasing annually. Pineapple wastes which comprise about 2000 species are one of the major contributors for the increase in lignocellulosic wastes globally which produces annually over 14 million tons worldwide. It is the eighth most abundantly produced fruit in the world (Amin *et al.*, 2017; Hajar *et al.*, 2012). In Malaysia, it is forecasted that the amount of pineapple waste will significantly increase as a consequence of intensified pineapple plantation and canned fruit production in the country by the year of 2020 (Ruekeith, 2015). During pineapple processing, almost 50% of total fruit weight is removed as waste such as stem, crown, peel and core. Therefore, pineapple wastes are proportionally increasing with the increase in pineapple production (Saravanan, Muthuvelayudham, & Vruthagiri, 2013). It causes serious environmental problems since only fewer amount of the pineapple waste are crushed and used as animal feed but most of them are dumped into the environment which causes anaerobic digestion due to microbial spoilage (Ong, Tan, & Liew, 2014).

As a result, formation of methane gas occurs in the absence of oxygen condition causes major environmental problems such as global warming. In addition, dumping pineapple waste in soil also cause groundwater pollution and land degradation (Chulalaksananukul, Sinbuathong & Chulalaksananukul, 2012). Therefore, the interest in research in pineapple wastes utilization to produce valuable bio-sourced materials have increased such as production of biofuels, biogas, fine chemicals, energy source and enzyme production (Anwar, Gulfraz & Irshad, 2014). Pineapple waste has great potential to be used as raw material for reprocessing that will benefit the environment and economy (Itelina *et al.*, 2013; Saravanan, Muthuvelayudham, & Vruthagiri, 2013).

However, developments of the pineapple wastes conversion to valuable products still remain a big challenge. It has evolved to resist degradation as physicochemical structural and compositional factor such as thick layer of lignin makes them resistant to enzymatic and chemical degradation. It hinders the breakdown of cellulose in pineapple wastes to sugar units or other organic compounds. Therefore, pre-treatment processes are important to be applied in order to remove lignin and reduce hemicelluloses to sugar monomers as it break down bonds linked in the complex chains of biomass (Amin *et al.*, 2017; Kumar, Barrett, Delwiche & Stroeve, 2009).

Furthermore, it also removes inhibitors and decreases the crystalline structure. This enables the enzymes and microorganisms access easily into the structure and digests the cellulose chains. Moreover, pre-treatment is also important in producing value added products at high selectivity and yields at economical costs. Among the various pre-treatment techniques, alkaline pre-treatment shows highest improvement in lignocellulosic breakdown rates by altering the physical and chemical structure. Previous studies show that the following pre-treatment have improved the yields above 90% from the theoretical yield for lignocellulosic biomasses such as grasses, corn, rice husk and others (Amin *et al.*, 2017; Kumar, Barrett, Delwiche & Stroeve, 2009).

1.3 Objectives

- i. To identify the degradation of lignin content in pineapple peels waste after NaOH pre-treatment.
- ii. To study the delignification kinetic and determine its activation energy.

1.4 Scope of Study

The following scopes are performed to acquire the objectives:

- i. Identify the degradation of lignin content in pineapple peels waste after pre-treated with NaOH at different concentration range, temperature and retention time using RSM.
- ii. Evaluate delignification kinetic and determine activation energy of pineapple peels waste after the pre-treatment using Arrhenius equation.

1.5 Significance of Study

The research study will aid to attain maximum degradation of lignin content from pineapple peels waste after pre-treatment with NaOH at different parameter of NaOH concentration, temperature and retention time. Furthermore, the study aid to

determine the amount of energy required for pineapple peels waste to initiate the reaction after pre-treatment.

1.6 Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of 5 chapters which represents the sequence works of this research.

Chapter 1 describes the overview of lignin degradation in pineapple peels waste after pre-treatment with NaOH including background of study, problem statement, objective, scope and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 consists of the general and scientific information about lignocellulosic physical and chemical properties, potential of agricultural wastes to produce bio-based products, potential and characteristics of pineapple waste, pre-treatment of lignocellulosic biomass and delignification of pineapple peels wastes.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology involving characterization of pineapple peels waste, experimental procedure of pineapple peels wastes with NaOH and alkaline delignification to determine the activation energy using Arrhenius equation.

Chapter 4 covers the results obtained from the study by the experimental parameter tested and kinetic of pineapple peels waste delignification using Arrhenius equation.

Finally, chapter 5 covers the conclusion of the study. In this chapter, final conclusion on the optimum condition of lignin degradation in pineapple peels waste after pre-treatment with NaOH and its activation energy are identified.

1.7 Summary

Increasing of lignocellulosic biomass waste has made a major concern to all nations on the disposal method as it causes major environmental problems. One of the largest agriculture residues contributing to this matter is pineapple waste. Since pineapple peels rich in cellulose, hemicelluloses, sugars and other carbohydrates, it has huge potential use as substrate to be developed into valuable bio-based materials. However, pre-treatment methods are essential in order to overcome the complex structure of lignocellulosic biomass by making them accessible for enzymatic and microbial hydrolysis. Therefore, chemical pre-treatment, sodium hydroxide solution was used in order to degrade the lignin content in the pineapple peels waste. The influences of several parameters such as NaOH concentration, temperature and retention time on degradation of lignin were optimized and its activation energy is determined.

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