



Faculty of Engineering

**OPTIMIZATION OF BIOGAS PRODUCTION FROM PALM
OIL MILL EFFLUENT UNDER THE EFFECT OF SOLID
RETENTION TIME, ORGANIC LOADING RATE AND
HYDRAULIC RETENTION TIME**

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Final Year Project Report

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**OPTIMIZATION OF BIOGAS PRODUCTION FROM PALM OIL MILL
EFFLUENT UNDER THE EFFECT OF SOLID RETENTION TIME,
ORGANIC LOADING RATE AND HYDRAULIC RETENTION TIME**

FINNEGAN TINGGIE DAMPA ANAK INGING

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of
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For my beloved father, mother,

Brothers, sister and friend

Thanks for everything.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of organic loading rate (OLR), solid retention time (SRT) and hydraulic retention time (HRT) on the production of biogas from POME. POME that has been left untreated can cause serious damage to the environment around it. This study will explore the potential of biogas production of POME in anaerobic digestion. Anaerobic digestion of POME is where the bacteria will convert organic compounds into biogas without the presence of oxygen. At the same time, in anaerobic digestion will also remove compounds from the palm oil mill effluent, hence, treating the effluent. This study is conducted using an anaerobic bioreactor. This research is carried out at HRT of 4 to 10 days, SRT ranging at 10 to 22 days and OLR of 2-20 gVSS/Ld. Under all the following conditions, the anaerobic bioreactor operates for 30days. The volume of the biogas produced are collected from the bioreactor. The optimum value of biogas produced under all the input of conditions are 3.8L/d. The treatment of POME in anaerobic digestion has been proven to be successful process to treat POME, this is due to because it can significantly reduce damage to the environment and potentially becoming a source of renewable energy in the form of methane gas.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menilai kesan kadar pengambilan organik (OLR), masa pengekalan pepejal (SRT) dan masa pengekalan hidraulik (HRT) terhadap pengeluaran biogas dari POME. POME yang tidak dibiarkan tidak boleh menyebabkan kerosakan serius terhadap alam sekitar di sekelilingnya. Kajian ini akan meneroka potensi pengeluaran biogas POME dalam pencernaan anaerobik. Pencernaan anaerobik POME adalah di mana bakteria akan menukar sebatian organik ke biogas tanpa kehadiran oksigen. Pada masa yang sama, dalam pencernaan anaerobik juga akan mengeluarkan sebatian dari efluen kilang minyak sawit, oleh itu, merawat efluen. Kajian ini dijalankan menggunakan bioreaktor anaerob. Kajian ini dijalankan di HRT 4 hingga 10 hari, SRT antara 10 hingga 22 hari dan OLR 2-20 gVSS/Ld. Di bawah semua syarat berikut, bioreaktor anaerobik beroperasi selama 30 hari. Jumlah biogas yang dihasilkan dikumpulkan dari bioreaktor. Nilai optimum biogas yang dihasilkan di bawah semua input syarat adalah 3.8L/d. Rawatan POME dalam pencernaan anaerobik telah terbukti menjadi proses yang berjaya untuk merawat POME, ini kerana ia dapat mengurangkan kerosakan terhadap alam sekitar dan berpotensi menjadi sumber tenaga boleh diperbaharui dalam bentuk gas metana

TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ABSTRAK	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Characteristics and Properties of POME	2
1.3 Impact of POME on Environment, Health and Water.....	4
1.3.1 Impact of POME on Health	4
1.3.2 Impact of POME on Water Resource	5
1.3.3 Impact of POME on Agriculture	5

1.3.4 Impact of POME on Soil	5
1.3.5 Impact of POME on Air Quality	6
1.4 Resources in POME	6
1.5 POME Treatment.....	6
1.6 Problem Statement.....	7
1.7 Research Question	7
1.8 Objective of Research.....	8
1.9 Scope of Study for Achieving Research Goals	8
1.10 Novelty of Research	8
1.11 Framework of Research.....	9
1.12 Structure of Report	10
1.13 Chapter Summary	11
CHAPTER 2.....	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Overview of Chapter Two	12
2.1 Strategic Focus of Literature Review	12
2.2 Objectives of the Literature Review	13
2.3 Methods Applied for Reviewing Literature	13

2.4 Source and Procedure of Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME) Generation	13
2.4.1 Steam Sterilization.....	15
2.4.2 Stripping or Threshing.....	17
2.4.3 Digestion Process	17
2.4.4 Pressing.....	18
2.4.5 Decanter.....	19
2.4.6 Clarification Tank.....	20
2.4.7 Centrifuge Purification	20
2.4.8 Vacuum Drying	20
2.4.9 Storage Tank.....	21
2.4.10 Nut and Fibre Separator.....	21
2.4.12 Hydrocyclone	22
2.5 Impacts of Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME)	23
2.5.1 Impact on Human Health.....	23
2.5.2 Impact on Economy.....	24
2.5.3 Impact on Air.....	24
2.5.4 Impact on Soil.....	25
2.5.5 Impact on Water Quality	26

2.5.6 Impact on Greenhouse Gases (GHGs).....	26
2.5.7 Impact on Environment	27
2.6 Anaerobic Digestion in Contribution to Biogas Production.....	27
2.6.1 Hydraulic Retention Time (HRT)	28
2.6.2 Solid Retention Time (SRT).....	29
2.6.3 Organic Loading Rate (OLR)	31
2.6.4 Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) and Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)	31
2.7 Anaerobic Biodegradation to Recover Resources from POME	32
2.8 Mechanics of Optimization to Recover Resources from POME.....	34
2.8.1 Mathematical Model on Production Optimization	34
2.8.2 Central Composite Design (CCD) on Production Optimization	35
2.8.3 Response Surface Methodology (RSM) on Production Optimization	40
2.8.4 Design of Experiment (DoE) on Production Optimization	43
2.9 Gap Analysis	45
2.10 Summary of Literature Review	45
CHAPTER 3.....	46
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	46
3.1 Overview of Research Methodology.....	46

3.2 Research Design for Achieving Goal	47
3.2.1 Use of CCD in optimization	49
3.2.2 The axial point	50
3.2.3 Design of Experiments (DoE)	50
3.3 Research Variables	52
3.4 Research Design to Achieve Objective One	52
3.4.1 Experiment Design Data Analysis.....	54
3.4.2 Research Design to Achieve Objective Two	54
3.4.3 Definition of Data	56
3.5 Experiment Overview and Design setup	59
3.5.1 Experiment Setup	59
3.5.2 Experiment Setup and research conducting to produce biogas	59
3.6 Data Collection Method	64
3.6.1 Data Analysis.....	65
3.7 Chapter Summary	65
CHAPTER 4.....	66
RESULT AND DISCUSSION	66
4.0 Introduction	66

4.1 Anaerobic Bioreactor Start-up.....	67
4.2 Determining the Factors that Significantly Effect on Biogas Production	67
4.2.1 Experimental and Order.....	69
4.2.2 Set up Experiment for Conducting Total Experiment Run	70
4.2.3 Data Analysis and Findings.....	70
4.2.4 Conclusion and Answer to the Research Question.....	74
4.3 Optimization Factors that Effect to Biogas Production.....	74
4.3.1 Data Analysis and Findings.....	75
4.3.2 Conclusion and Answer to the Research Question.....	77
4.4 Scenario Analysis of the Research Findings	78
4.4.1 Organic Loading Rate Scenario Analysis.....	78
4.4.2 Solid Retention Time Scenario Analysis.....	78
4.4.3 Hydraulic Retention Time Scenario Analysis	79
Chapter 5.....	80
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	80
5.1 Outcome of Research.....	80
5.1.1 Outcome Number One of Research.....	80
5.1.2 Outcome Number Two of Research	81

5.2 Answer to Research Question.....	81
5.3 Implication of Research Outcome	81
5.3.1 Implication of Research Outcomes Towards the Environment.....	82
5.4 Recommendation for Future Study	82
5.5 Conclusion of This Study	83
REFERENCES	85
APPENDIX	89

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
Table 1.1 Crude oil palm production of Malaysia in 2015 and 2016	2
Table 1.2 POME Characteristics	4
Table 2.1 Overview of Literature Review	12
Table 2.2 Conditions for Steam Sterilization	16
Table 2.3 HRTs by Previous Researchers	28
Table 2.4 SRTs by Previous Researchers	30
Table 2.5 OLRs by Previous Researchers	31
Table 3.1 List of Variables Used in the Study	58
Table 4.1 Experimental Range and Independent Variables Levels	68
Table 4.2 Factors that Significantly Contribute to Biogas Production	73
Table 4.3 Optimum Values of Variables	77

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
Figure 1.1	Framework of Research	9
Figure 1.2	Structure of Report	10
Figure 2.1	Process Operations and Process in Palm Oil Extraction Process	14
Figure 2.2	Flow Process of Stripping	17
Figure 2.3	Structure of Decanter	19
Figure 2.4	Schematic Diagram of Hydrocyclone	23
Figure 2.5	Schematic Representation of Anaerobic Biodegradation	32
Figure 2.6	Input-Output Optimization	35
Figure 2.7	Input of Variable in MiniTab	39
Figure 2.8	Box-Behnken Design	39
Figure 2.9	RSM of OLR, CN and PH value	43
Figure 3.1	Research Methodology of Study	48
Figure 3.2	Steps in the Research Methodology for Specific Objective One	53
Figure 3.3	Steps in the Research Methodology for Specific Objective Two	55
Figure 3.4	Input-Output Model with Research Variable	57
Figure 3.5	Input-Output Model with Research Variable	57
Figure 3.6	Schematic Representation of Anaerobic Biodegradation	60
Figure 3.7	Schematic Diagram of Anaerobic Bioreactor	62
Figure 3.8	Feed Stock	63
Figure 3.9	Lab Scale Anaerobic Bioreactor	64
Figure 3.10	Biogas Collector – Water Displacement Method	64
Figure 4.1	Output of Central Composite Design	69
Figure 4.2	Data Distribution of Biogas Outputs from Batch Type Bioreactors	70
Figure 4.3	ANOVA Quadratic Model from Batch Type Bioreactor	71
Figure 4.4	FIT Analysis of Coefficient in Terms of Coded Factor	72
Figure 4.5	FIT Statistics for R^2	72

Figure 4.6	Surface Response Optimization on HRT, OLR and Biogas	75
Figure 4.7	Surface Response Optimization on SRT, HRT and Biogas	76
Figure 4.8	Surface Response Optimization on OLR, SRT and Biogas	76

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3D	3 Dimensional
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BOD	Biochemical Oxygen Demand
C/N	Carbon to Nitrogen Ratio
CCD	Central Composite Design
COD	Chemical Oxygen Demand
CPKO	Crude Palm Kernel Oil
CPO	Crude Palm Oil
CQAs	Critical Quality Attributes
DOE	Department of Environmental
DoE	Design of Experiment
EGSB	Expanded Granular Sludge Bed
FFA	Free Fatty Acid
FFB	Fresh Fruit Bunches
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GLS	Gas-Liquid-Solid
HRT	Hydraulic Retention Time
MPOB	Malaysian Palm Oil Board
MTDP	Maximum Target Desired Profile
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
OLR	Organic Loading Rate
pH	Potential of Hydrogen
POME	Palm Oil Mill Effluent
PVC	Polyvinyl Chloride
RSM	Response Surface Method
SRT	Solid Retention Time
UASB	Up-Flow Anaerobic Sludge Blanket
USSB	Up-Flow Staged Sludge Bed
VFA	Volatile Organic Compound
VOC	Volatile Organic Compound

VSS	Volatile Suspended Solid
WtR	Water to Resource

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This report is on FYP which aims to address the issue in the palm oil mill effluent (POME) and biogas production optimization from POME. This study is conducted to apply the knowledge of Operations Research in engineering to contribute to achieve social, economic, and environmental sustainability. POME can no longer be regarded as a harmful effluent as reported by many researches. POME can be categorised as a form of resource in which it provides countless benefits towards the palm oil industry itself. In this study, POME is treated in an anaerobic condition to produce biogas. The findings of this study will also contribute to producing biogas which bring benefits to environment. Eventually, this study will certainly add new knowledge into the advancement of converting biomass and organic materials of POME into useable energy.

1.1 Background of Study

The palm oil mill is one of the major industries in Malaysia and it is growing rapidly to become as a significant agriculture-based industry for contributing to Malaysian economy. Malaysia is the second largest in palm oil industries of the world. The total productions of crude palm oil in 2015 and 2016 are shown in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: Crude oil palm production of Malaysia in 2015 and 2016 (MPOB, 2015, 2016).

Month	2015 (tonnes)	2016 (tonnes)
January	1,160,687	1,129,747
February	1,121,628	1,042,904
March	1,495,151	1,219,449
April	1,693,425	1,301,291
May	1,810,530	1,364,583
June	1,763,667	1,532,613
July	1,815,634	1,585,341
August	2,051,000	1,701,833
September	1,959,064	1,715,085
October	2,037,466	1,677,873
November	1,653,946	1,574,938
December	1,399,383	1,473,717
Total	19,961,581	17,319,374

The area planted with oil palm is estimated to be 5.64 million hectares in 2015, an increase of 4.6 percent in 2014 compared to 5.39 million hectares. Sabah is still the largest state planted with oil palms, with 27% of the total area planted with oil palms, followed by Sarawak with 26%, while Peninsular Malaysia which accounted for 47%. The palm oil industry provides a source of livelihood to rural families in government land schemes and private small holders, as well as employment opportunities to agricultural workers in estates (Wu, Mohammad, Jahim, & Anuar, 2010). In addition, Malaysia accounts for 12% and 27% of the world's total oil and fat production and exports (Madaki & Seng, 2013b). Malaysia is known as the palm oil and its products ' major producers and exporters. Therefore, sustainability in line with environmental sustainability is important to meet the worldwide need for oils and fats.

1.2 Characteristics and Properties of POME

Impacts on the environment is the main concern of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies regarding the increase of the palm oil industry. The negative impacts include deforestation, biodiversity loss, indiscriminate burning, water pollution, and severe GHG emissions. Palm oil mill effluent is the most important pollutant from palm oil mills. To obtain crude palm oil (CPO) and other palm oil products, POME is a by-product of processed FFB. POME has been a waste in the palm oil industry in the past. Often POME is discharged into the waterways by the industry. As POME is biodegradable and contains high level COD and BOD. Without

treatment, POME cannot be discharged directly from the mill. This is because POME is acidic in nature and contains residual oil that is not easily separated by the conventional system based on gravity. Sometimes, raw POME can have a BOD and COD level 100 times higher than domestic sewage (Madaki & Seng, 2013).

POME consist of water-soluble components of palm fruits as well as suspended cellulosic materials such as palm fibres, oil, fat, grease, cell walls, organelles, and a variety of carbohydrates, ranging from nitrogenous compounds, organic acids, and small amount of organic and mineral constituents. POME consists of 95 - 96% water, 4 - 5% total solids, 2 - 4% suspended solids, and 0.6 - 0.7% oil and grease. It has been estimated that the production of 1 tonne of crude oil palm generates about 2.5 - 3.5 m³ of POME (Ahmad et al., 2015; Jefferson et al., 2016). During POME digestion, methane (CH₄) and CO₂ is generated, which is released into the atmosphere. Both CH₄ and CO₂ gas emission are regarded as greenhouse gas which are responsible for ozone depletion. Methane gas are 25 times higher in contributing to global warming potentials compare to CO₂, and POME is one of the potential source of methane gas emission.

POME's composition is largely dependent on the season, the quality of the raw material, and the operations being practiced. POME is a thick brownish colloidal mixture of water, oil, and fine suspended solids when it is still fresh. This effluent has 80 - 90°C high temperature. POME contains high amounts of solids (40000 mg/L), oil and grease (6000 mg/L), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) on average 25000 mg/L and chemical oxygen demand (COD) at 51000 mg/L. The distinctive characteristics of POME are shown in Table 1.2. No chemicals are added during extraction process; hence, the effluent is non-toxic during the process. Due to the presence of organic acids, the pH of the effluent is low during fermentation process in its complex form.