



Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering

**EFFECTS OF CURING ANGLE ON LAMINATED UNSATURATED
POLYESTER / EPOXY COMPOSITES STRUCTURES**

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Master of Science in Manufacturing Engineering

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**EFFECTS OF CURING ANGLE ON LAMINATED UNSATURATED
POLYESTER / EPOXY COMPOSITES STRUCTURES**

TAN TENG TENG

**A thesis submitted
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science
in Manufacturing Engineering**

Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering

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2015

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “Effects of Curing Angle on Laminated Unsaturated Polyester / Epoxy Composites Structures” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature :

Name : Tan Teng Teng

Date :

APPROVAL

I hereby declare that I have read this thesis and in my opinion this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of Master of Science in Manufacturing Engineering.

Signature :

Supervisor's Name : Dr. Mohd Yuhazri Bin Yaakob

Date :

DEDICATION

My late dad, Tan Chu,

For bringing me to this world.

Beloved mum, Lim Meoi,

For taking good care since small and working hard for the family.

Respected guardian, Xavier Rayan,

For precious advice and guidance in life and academic.

My concerned sisters, Tan Poh Ming, Tan Poh Yen and Tan Poh Lin,

For giving support and bringing fun.

ABSTRACT

Small and Medium Industries or Enterprises (SMI/E) in Malaysia that involved in composite industry faced a lot of challenges, ranging from raw materials, processes and product itself. The high production cost was due to the confined production floor as a result of horizontal curing plane for long hours. A solution was proposed by investigating the different curing angles (0° , 10° , 20° , 30° , 40° , 50° , 60° , 70° , 80° and 90°) to find out the best curing angle via hand lay-up assisted by vacuum bagging technique at room temperature thus is able to fabricate the composite parts with similar or improved properties besides saving space. A series of four-ply laminated glass fiber composite structures were impregnated with unsaturated polyester and epoxy separately then set to cure at different curing direction. The composite structures were tested with density, tensile, flexural and hardness tests to determine the mechanical performance, and also the SEM images were examined and analysed on fracture samples. Across the samples at different curing angles from curing angles of 0° to 90° , the peak performance found out to be frequently at 40° . However, the vertically cured 90° composite structure found out to have improved mechanical properties (1.089 % to 4.280 %) when benchmarked with horizontal curing plane at 0° . Curing at a tilting angle is possible to carry out. Therefore, the vertical curing of composite parts can be recommended to SMI/E in view of its improved performance and optimum space management solution.

ABSTRAK

Perusahaan Industri Kecil dan Sederhana (SMI/E) di Malaysia yang terlibat dalam industri komposit menghadapi banyak masalah, bermula dari bahan mentah, proses pengeluaran dan produk komposit itu sendiri. Kos pengeluaran menjadi meningkat kerana lantai pengeluaran terhad disebabkan sudut pengeringan mendatar untuk tempoh masa yang panjang. Satu penyelesaian dicadangkan untuk menyasat kesan sudut pengeringan bermula dari keadaan mendatar sehingga menegak (0° , 10° , 20° , 30° , 40° , 50° , 60° , 70° , 80° and 90°) bagi mengetahui sudut pengeringan terbaik melalui teknik bengkalai tangan dibantu oleh tekanan beg pada suhu bilik bagi mampu menghasilkan ciri-ciri komposit yang serupa atau lebih baik selain menjimat ruang. Satu siri struktur komposit berlapis yang mempunyai empat lapis gentian kaca dihasilkan menggunakan poliester tak tepu dan resin epoksi secara berasingan lalu dikeringkan pada sudut pengeringan yang berlainan. Struktur komposit itu diuji terhadap ujian ketumpatan, tegangan, lenturan dan kekerasan untuk menentukan prestasi mekanikal, di samping itu, imej SEM dianalisis ke atas sampel patah. Di antara sudut pengeringan dari 0° sehingga 90° , prestasi maksimum didapati kebanyakan berlaku pada 40° . Walau bagaimanapun, ciri-ciri mekanikal struktur komposit yang dikeringkan pada 90° didapati lebih baik (1.089 % to 4.280 %) apabila dibandingkan dengan sudut pengeringan mendatar pada 0° . Pengeringan pada kedudukan sudut didapati berjaya. Dengan itu, pengeringan menegak bahagian komposit boleh dicadangkan kepada SMI/E memandangkan prestasi yang lebih baik dan pengurusan ruang yang lebih optimum.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| DECLARATION | |
| APPROVAL | |
| DEDICATION | |
| ABSTRACT | i |
| ABSTRAK | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | viii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xi |
| LIST OF SYMBOLS | xii |
| LIST OF PUBLICATIONS | xiii |
| | |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Problem Statement | 4 |
| 1.3 Objective | 5 |
| 1.4 Scope | 6 |
| 1.5 Rational of Research | 7 |
| 1.6 Chapter Outline | 8 |
| | |
| 2 LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1 Introduction to Composites | 10 |
| 2.2 Fiber Reinforced Polymer | 10 |
| 2.2.1 Fibers | 11 |
| 2.2.2 Glass Fiber Type E | 13 |
| 2.3 Polymer Based Composites | 14 |
| 2.3.1 Thermoset from Plastics | 15 |
| 2.3.1.1 Unsaturated Polyester Resin | 15 |
| 2.3.1.2 Epoxy Resin | 17 |
| 2.4 Recent Researches on Laminated Composites using Glass Fiber | 20 |
| 2.4.1 Glass Fiber/Unsaturated Polyester | 20 |
| 2.4.2 Glass Fiber/Epoxy | 21 |
| 2.5 Methyl Ethyl Ketone Peroxide | 22 |
| 2.6 Curing | 23 |
| 2.6.1 Curing of Unsaturated Polyester Resin | 25 |
| 2.6.2 Curing of Epoxy Resin | 26 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 2.7 | Types of Curing Method | 27 |
| 2.7.1 | Room Temperature Curing | 27 |
| 2.7.2 | Thermal Curing | 28 |
| 2.7.3 | Ultraviolet Curing | 29 |
| 2.7.4 | Electron Beam Curing | 30 |
| 2.7.5 | Microwave Curing | 30 |
| 2.8 | Manufacturing Technique of Thermoset Polymer | 31 |
| 2.8.1 | Hand Lay-Up | 32 |
| 2.8.2 | Hand Lay-Up Assisted by Vacuum Bagging Technique | 32 |
| 2.9 | Comparison of Hand Lay-Up and Vacuum Bagging Assisted Hand Lay-Up | 33 |
| 2.10 | Review on the Curing Plane of the Previous Researches | 34 |
| 3 | METHODOLOGY | 38 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 38 |
| 3.2 | Material Selection | 38 |
| 3.2.1 | Glass Fiber Type E | 39 |
| 3.2.2 | Unsaturated Polyester Resin | 40 |
| 3.2.3 | Epoxy Resin | 41 |
| 3.3 | Design of Thermosetting Laminated Composite | 44 |
| 3.3.1 | Four Layers of Glass Fiber | 44 |
| 3.3.2 | Dimension of the Composite Structure | 45 |
| 3.3.3 | Curing Angles | 47 |
| 3.4 | Fabrication | 49 |
| 3.4.1 | Flexible Work Table | 49 |
| 3.4.1.1 | Angle Blocks | 50 |
| 3.4.2 | Preparation of Resin | 50 |
| 3.5 | Vacuum Bagging Technique | 53 |
| 3.6 | Tests | 58 |
| 3.6.1 | Tensile | 59 |
| 3.6.2 | Flexural | 61 |
| 3.6.3 | Hardness | 62 |
| 3.6.4 | Scanning Electron Microscopy | 64 |
| 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS | 66 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 66 |
| 4.2 | Density Test | 66 |
| 4.2.1 | Density of Unsaturated Polyester Composites and Epoxy Composites | 67 |
| 4.3 | Tensile Test | 73 |
| 4.3.1 | Tensile Strength of Unsaturated Polyester Composites and Epoxy Composites | 73 |
| 4.4 | Flexural Test | 80 |
| 4.4.1 | Flexural Strength of Unsaturated Polyester Composite and Epoxy Composites | 80 |
| 4.5 | Hardness | 85 |
| 4.5.1 | Hardness of Unsaturated Polyester Composites and Epoxy Composites | 85 |
| 4.6 | Comparison between Vertical Curing (90°) and Horizontal Curing (0°) | 88 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 4.7 | Comparison between Vertical Curing (90°) and Inclined Curing (40°) | 90 |
| 5 | CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 93 |
| 5.1 | Conclusions | 93 |
| 5.2 | Recommendations | 94 |
| 5.3 | Contribution to New Knowledge | 95 |
| | REFERENCES | 96 |

LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE | TITLE | PAGE |
|--------------|--|-------------|
| 2.1 | Types of glass fiber | 12 |
| 2.2 | Mechanical properties of E type fibers glass | 14 |
| 2.3 | Mechanical properties of unsaturated polyester resin | 17 |
| 2.4 | Mechanical properties of epoxy resin | 19 |
| 2.5 | Properties of epoxy resin and unsaturated polyester | 20 |
| 2.6 | Mechanical properties of cellulose-pulp composites cured at room temperature and autoclave temperature | 28 |
| 2.7 | Comparison of hand lay-up and vacuum bagging assisted hand lay-up fabricated composite structures | 34 |
| 2.8 | Previous researches revealed the horizontal curing plane for composites | 35 |
| 4.1 | Percentage improved of vertical curing (90°) compared to horizontal curing (0°) | 89 |
| 4.2 | Percentage improved of horizontal curing (0°) compared to vertical curing (90°) | 90 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| FIGURE | TITLE | PAGE |
|--------|---|------|
| 2.1 | Chemical formula of unsaturated polyester | 16 |
| 2.2 | The chemical formula of epoxy resin 1,3-bis(2,3-epoxypropoxy)-benzene | 18 |
| 2.3 | Comparison between conventional and microwave curing: (a) tensile and flexural moduli against fly ash content and (b) impact strength and tensile strength at break against fly ash content | 31 |
| 3.1 | The woven roving glass fiber type E | 39 |
| 3.2 | Unsaturated polyester in the form of liquid | 40 |
| 3.3 | Mixing of epoxy system | 41 |
| 3.4 | Flow chart of research methodology | 43 |
| 3.5 | A stack of four layers of glass fiber for a laminated structure | 44 |
| 3.6 | Top, middle and bottom regions in the composite structure | 45 |
| 3.7 | Estimated dimension for the composite structure | 46 |
| 3.8 | Curing angle of laminated composite from 0° to 90° | 47 |
| 3.9 | Four-layered thermosetting composite structures being cured at (a) 0°, (b) 10° to 80° and (c) 90° | 48 |
| 3.10 | Work table supported by angle blocks for the proposed curing angle | 49 |
| 3.11 | Wooden angle blocks used for determining the position of composite curing | 50 |
| 3.12 | Resins (a) epoxy resin and hardener and (b) unsaturated polyester | 52 |
| 3.13 | Resin and hardener of epoxy (a) in heterogeneous phase and (b) yellowish-cream colour of well mixed epoxy | 52 |

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| 3.14 | Glass fiber and its bagging materials | 53 |
| 3.15 | Work table (a) wrapped with plastic film, (b) sealant tape surrounded the perimeter of the work table, (c) helical silicon tube fenced up the inner sealant tape and (d) T-shaped connector fitted to connect to the resin trap | 54 |
| 3.16 | Lay-up (a) resin spread to the fiber and (b) the fibers was saturated with the resin | 55 |
| 3.17 | Vacuum bagging technique (a) glass fiber laminated composite (b) adjusting nylon netting (c) work table was engaged to the desired curing angle and (d) curing at room temperature | 56 |
| 3.18 | Curing angles at (a) 0°, (b) 30°, (c) 60° and (d) 90° | 57 |
| 3.19 | Debagging (a) bagging waste and (b) composite structure | 58 |
| 3.20 | Top loading balances used to weigh the weight of the specimens | 59 |
| 3.21 | Tensile test (a) universal testing machine and (b) specimens | 60 |
| 3.22 | Specimen size for tensile test | 60 |
| 3.23 | Flexural test (a) specimens and (b) three point bending position | 61 |
| 3.24 | Size for flexural specimen | 62 |
| 3.25 | Principle of operation of shore D durometer | 63 |
| 3.26 | (a) Sputter coater with argon gas and (b) scanning electron microscope | 65 |
| 4.1 | Density of unsaturated polyester composites | 67 |
| 4.2 | Top, middle and bottom regions of unsaturated polyester composites at 30° under the magnification of 180x | 69 |
| 4.3 | Density of epoxy composites | 70 |
| 4.4 | Epoxy composites of top and bottom regions cured at 80° under the magnification of 40x | 72 |
| 4.5 | Tensile strength of the unsaturated polyester composites | 74 |
| 4.6 | The bottom regions of the composites at curing angles of 0°, 50° and 90° at the magnification of 180x | 75 |

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| 4.7 | Tensile strength for epoxy composites in the regions of top, middle and bottom | 78 |
| 4.8 | The middle region of the unsaturated polyester and epoxy composites at the curing plane of 50° under the magnification of 180x | 79 |
| 4.9 | The flexural strength of unsaturated polyester composites for the top, middle and bottom regions | 81 |
| 4.10 | Delamination at the middle region for unsaturated polyester composites at the 0° and 90° curing plane | 82 |
| 4.11 | Flexural strength of unsaturated polyester composite structures via vacuum bagging techniques | 84 |
| 4.12 | The tensile and compression zones that experienced by the epoxy composites at 30° under low magnification at 40x | 85 |
| 4.13 | The hardness values of the unsaturated polyester composites | 86 |
| 4.14 | Hardness of epoxy composites | 88 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| ASTM | - | American Society for Testing and Materials |
| DCPD | - | Dicyclopentadiene |
| FRP | - | Fiber reinforced plastics |
| MEKP | - | Methyl ethyl ketone peroxide |
| PP | - | Polypropylene |
| PVC | - | Polyvinylchloride |
| RM | - | Ringgit Malaysia |
| SEM | - | Scanning electron microscopy |
| SMI/E | - | Small and medium industries or enterprises |
| UP | - | Unsaturated polyester |
| UTeM | - | Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka |
| UTM | - | Universal testing machine |
| UV | - | Ultraviolet |

LIST OF SYMBOLS

| | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| atm | - | Atmosphere |
| g | - | Gram |
| GPa | - | Giga Pascal |
| kN | - | Kilo Newton |
| m | - | Meter |
| mm | - | Millimeter |
| MPa | - | Mega Pascal |
| N | - | Newton |
| s | - | Second |
| % | - | Percent |
| ± | - | Plus or minus |
| E_a | - | Activation energy |
| g/cm^3 | - | Gram per centimetre cube |
| kg/m^3 | - | Kilogram per meter cube |
| mPa.s | - | Mili Pascal-second |
| N/mm^2 | - | Newton per milimeter square |
| ° | - | Degree |
| °C | - | Degree Celcius |
| Pa.s | - | Pascal-second |
| wt % | - | Weight percent |
| ρ | - | Density |

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journals

- (a) Jennise, T.T.T., Yuhazri, M.Y., Sihombing, H., Yahaya, S.H., Nirmal U. and Megat Ahmad, M.M.H., 2013. Gravity Effects of Curing Angle on Laminated Composite Structures: A Review on Novel Study. *Journal of Advances in Materials Science and Engineering*, vol. 2013, pp. 1-10.
- (b) Yuhazri, M.Y., Jennise, T.T.T., Sihombing, H., Mohamad, N., Yahaya, S.H. and Zalkis M.Y.A., 2013. Water Absorption and Thickness Swelling of Laminated Composite after Cured at Different Angle. *Applied Mechanics and Materials*, vol. 465-466, pp. 86-90.
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- (c) Yuhazri, M.Y., Jennise, T.T.T., Sihombing, H., Said, M.R., Nirmal, U. and Megat Ahmad, M.M.H., 2013. Tensile Properties of Angle Cured Laminated Composites Structures under Gravity Effects. 4th International Conference on Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering (ICME 2013), Putrajaya, 17th - 19th December 2013.
- (d) Yuhazri, M.Y., Jennise, T.T.T., Sihombing, H., Qumrul Ahsan, Lau, S.T.W. and Mohd Imran Ghazali, 2013. Gravity Effects on the Density of Laminated Composite

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- (e) Jennise, T.T.T., Yuhazri, M.Y., Sihombing H., Zalkis, M.Y.A. and Megat Ahmad, M.M.H., 2013. Gravity Effects on the Flexural Properties of Laminated Composite due to Curing at Angle Position. Seminar Kebangsaan Aplikasi Sains Dan Matematik (SKASM 2013), UTHM, 29th – 30th October 2013.

- (f) Jennise, T.T.T. and Yuhazri, M.Y., 2012. A Preliminary Novel Study on the Gravity Effects of Curing or Drying Angle on Laminated Composite Structure. 5th International Conference on Postgraduate Education (5th ICPE), UTM, 18th - 19th December 2012.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Utilization of high technology and advanced engineering materials such as composites are getting common and its demand is increasing. It is because the usage of composites is very significant and extensively applied in the field of civil, mechanical and aerospace, shipping, automobiles and construction (Topal and Uzman, 2008). The favourable characteristic of composites such as non-corrosive, high stiffness, high strength to weight ratio, environment resistance and ease of processing are the main factors over the selection of conventional materials such as metal, plastics and ceramic (Aktas *et al.*, 2011; Kolachalama, 2007). These superior and excellent properties of composites are determined by both of the main constituents in the structure which precisely termed as reinforcement and matrix. The polymeric matrix that is commonly called as plastics in engineering terminology is often work with fibers to form a Fiber Reinforced Plastics (FRP) which is well known for various structural components (Zaid *et al.*, 2011). The role of fiber in the composites structure is to provide mechanical support while the matrix is responsible for holding the fibers together (Said *et al.*, 2012).

The composite manufacturing is a very active industry and it is gaining much attention and popularity partly due to the material that is able to tailor made its properties according to its function and purpose. Since the demand of such engineering material is very high, small and medium industries or enterprises (SMI/E) in Malaysia are also using various processing methods to manufacture FRP inclusive of filament winding, pultrusion, vacuum bagging, autoclave and compression moulding. However, processing composite

structure sometimes can be very expensive and the equipment needed to invest can cost a huge sum of money. Due to this reason, alternative is required to substitute the process that involved large amount of money so that it can be suited into SMI/E taking the economic target as part of the considerations. Although innovation has been taken to change the process in the manufacturing of the composites, the functions of the product should remain the same to provide the best solution to its application fields and performance.

Besides the materials that cost, curing process during manufacturing has always been emphasised and given much attention (Jain and Shaikh, 2012; Wang *et al.*, 2011b; Kim *et al.*, 2012). The curing process of the composites is vital because it is one of the factors that determine the properties of the products. Proper curing applied to the composites will mightily enhance the performance of mechanical and physical of the product. Through curing, the polymer matrix of thermoset is hardened together with reinforcement by cross-linking chains with addition of appropriate hardener. Suitable curing condition and method will influence the degree of cure in the composites thus resulting in the dissimilar mechanical properties (Pochiraju *et al.*, 2012).

The major concern for curing in this context is the curing plane that takes up large area for long curing hours. The production has to be slowed down to suit to the curing process since limited area is available such as in the SMI/E. Commonly and conventionally, the composites are cured on the horizontal plane as it is simple and sensible as shown in the studies of Kumar *et al.* (2014), Tabi (2013), Boopalan *et al.* (2013), Mir *et al.* (2013), Almeida *et al.* (2013) and Tran *et al.* (2013). To the best knowledge of the author, there is no research study reveals the curing is at other angle besides on the horizontal plane. Moreover, the discussion of gravity effect is so far limited to the fields for instances liquid transporting as seen in petroleum transportation, water supply to the housing estates, waste water management in the piping system and dam water to generate electricity which may

have involved horizontal, inclined and vertical planes (Deka et al., 2014; Sarghini et al., 2013; Minussi and Maciel, 2012).

During the curing of the thermosetting laminated composites, it is vital to know that the pre-gel resin is driven by the gravity when curing at angle position and vertical plane. Once the catalyst is added to the resin, the chemical reaction takes place such as the exothermic reaction and the formation of cross-linking. It will slowly lead to the decrease of the viscosity of the resin turning into gel form and finally becomes harden once curing process is done. It is curious to know to what extend would the viscous resin that applied in between the layers of reinforcement be influenced by the gravity prior to the resin cure.

In the composites industry, vacuum bagging technique is a common and well-known manufacturing method that used by various manufacturers due to its medium capital cost and high quality composite production. Vacuum bagging assists hand lay-up process for improved properties and it can have various changing parameters according to the desire such as the thickness, irregular and complex shapes, large size and alignment of the long fibers to obtain its controlled orientation quality. Moreover, it is a good solution to the tight budget allocation (Park and Seo, 2011; Boudenne *et al.*, 2011).

To achieve full benefit of composites, lamination can be considered in order to gain an optimum structure. There are wide range of composite laminates can be developed such as slab lamination, sandwich lamination, and all laminated structure. Lamination is extensively used as satellite structures, snow skis, bicycles, archery limbs as well as construction and infrastructure for instances beams, columns and walls (Park and Seo, 2011).

1.2 Problem Statement

Curing is very important in composites so that to gain the fully cured and high quality products at a reduced cost. The importance of curing in composites have always been discussed to find improvement to establish optimum curing conditions and parameters (Lührs *et al.*, 2014; Palin *et al.*, 2014; Shah and Stansbury, 2014; Erickson *et al.*, 2014; Randolph *et al.*, 2014; Watts and Alnazzawi, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2012).

Gravity-driven fluids on inclined plane has drawn the attention of a great crowd and has been a popular topic for study and discussion (Chinyoka *et al.*, 2013; Hu and Kieweg, 2012; Del-Castillo *et al.*, 2011). Discover the advantage of the gravity and utilise it by incorporating into the industry such as the flow of oil-water in the inclined pipe (Deka *et al.*, 2014; Dasari *et al.*, 2014; Sotgia and Tartarini, 2006), water or liquid flows in an inclined plane (Sarghini *et al.*, 2013; Minussi and Maciel, 2012; Song *et al.*, 2012; Cremonesi *et al.*, 2011), and inclined flow of wastewater (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2012). However, there is yet any researchers study and discuss on the curing of composite materials on the inclined plane or angle position under the influence of the gravity with the best effort from the author.

SMI/E in the composite sectors that manufacturing high quality composite components via vacuum bagging technique is troubled by some of the problems such as having high production costs and confined production floor. In the case of having limited working space caused by the horizontal curing plane of large composite parts for long hours in vacuum bagging in turns give rise to lower productivity (Gu *et al.*, 2014; McDonald *et al.*, 2014; Nasir *et al.*, 2013; Kmetty *et al.*, 2013; Giddings *et al.*, 2010). The investment in the SMI/E is very limited and often the further development is burdened and restricted by the difficulties faced. Hence, industries are seeking for alternatives or other