

**DURABILITY PERFORMANCE OF TERNARY BLEND ALKALI ACTIVATED
MORTARS FOR CONCRETE SURFACE DAMAGE REPAIR**

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MORTARS FOR CONCRETE SURFACE DAMAGE REPAIR

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My mother, whose sacrifice;
My father, whose dream;
My **Brothers and sisters**, whose support and encouragement;
And
My wife, whose patience;
Lead to achieve my doctoral degree

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ABSTRACT

The progressive deterioration of concrete surface structures being the major concern in construction engineering requires special protection and precise repairing. The adverse physical, chemical, thermal and biological processes that cause such rapid decay need to be overcome. The durability of concrete structure is found to be strongly influenced by inappropriate use of materials as well as their physical and chemical condition of the surroundings. The immediate consequence is the anticipated need of maintenance and execution of repairs. Lately, many alkalis activated mortars are synthesized by selectively combining some waste materials containing alumina and silica compounds which are further activated via strong alkaline solution. Despite the emergence of various alkalis activated as prospective material toward emergency repairs and coating, a functional alkali activated with efficient repairing attributes and endurance is far from being achieved. Generally, the alkaline solution prepared by mixing concentrated sodium silicate and sodium hydroxide restrict the broad array of repairing applications of alkalis activated mortar. Furthermore, they are not only expensive and hazardous to the workers but negatively impact the environment. The research attempted to produce environmental friendly alkali activated by blending different ratios of sodium hydroxide and sodium silicate at low concentration. Durability and mechanical strength of the synthesized ternary blend alkalis activated mortars were evaluated to inspect their repairing effectiveness towards concrete surface damage. Tests were performed for determining the porosity, shrinkage, compressive strength and slant bond shear strength. Microstructures and thermal properties were evaluated using XRD, SEM, TGA, DTG and FTIR measurements. The prepared ternary blend contained the ground blast furnace slag, fly ash and palm oil fuel ash or ceramic waste powder. The prepared fresh, hardened and durable mortars were activated with affable alkaline solution (at low concentration) of sodium hydroxide and sodium silicate. The ground blast furnace slag that acted as the main resource of Ca^{++} was used to replace the low amount of Na^+ in the geopolymerization process. The amount of slag in the blend varied in the range of 20 - 70%. The addition of slag to the blend had improved the strength and durability properties as well the microstructure characteristics. This improvement is majorly attributed to the participation of calcium silicate hydrate and calcium aluminosilicate hydrate beside sodium aluminosilicate hydrate bonds in reaction products. The results revealed that all the prepared mixes developed appreciable strength under mild alkaline solution. Furthermore, the alkali activated specimens prepared with high slag content displayed good durability including abrasion, thawing-freezing and shrinkage. The research has established that the ternary blend alkalis activated mortars with friendly alkaline solution contributes towards the development of high strength and durable repairing materials for concrete structures.

ABSTRAK

Kerosakan progresif struktur permukaan konkrit limbah merupakan masalah utama dalam bidang kejuruteraan pembinaan dan masalah ini memerlukan perlindungan khas dan pembaikan pulih. Kesan negatif fizikal, kimia, perubahan suhu dan biologi menyebabkan kerosakan yang cepat dan perlu diatasi dengan segera. Jangka panjang ketahanan struktur konkrit didapati dipengaruhi oleh penggunaan bahan serta keadaan fizikal dan kimia persekitaran. Sejak kebelakangan ini, banyak mortar berakali teraktif telah disintesis dengan menggabungkan beberapa bahan buangan yang mengandungi sebatian alumina dan silika yang seterusnya diaktifkan melalui larutan alkali yang kuat. Meskipun terdapat pelbagai alkali teraktif sebagai bahan untuk pembaikan pulih lapisan konkrit, namun, alkali teraktif yang mempunyai sifat-sifat pembaikan pulih yang cekap dan berketahanan tinggi masih belum dapat dihasilkan. Umumnya, larutan alkali yang disediakan dengan mencampurkan sebatian pekat silikat natrium dan sodium hidroksida mampu membaiki aplikasi mortar berakali teraktif dengan meluas. Di samping itu, sebatian ini bukan sahaja mahal dan berbahaya kepada pekerja tetapi memberi kesan negatif kepada alam sekitar. Kajian ini mengambil usaha untuk menghasilkan alkali teraktif yang mesra alam dengan menggabungkan nisbah natrium hidroksida dan natrium silikat yang berbeza pada kepekatan yang rendah. Ketahanan dan kekuatan mekanikal mortar berakali teraktif yang telah disintesis melalui pelbagai gabungan sebatian tersebut telah diuji untuk menilai keberkesanan pembaikan pulih kerosakan permukaan konkrit. Ujian dilaksanakan bagi menentukan keliangan, pengecutan, mampatan dan kekuatan ricihan condong. Mikrostruktur dan sifat haba pula dinilai dengan menggunakan ukuran XRD, SEM, TGA, DTG dan FTIR. Sebatian ternar yang disediakan mengandungi galian sanga relau bagas, abu terbang dan abu bahan bakar kelapa sawit atau serbuk sisa seramik. Mortar yang baharu, terkeras dan tahan lasak kemudiannya diaktifkan dengan larutan alkali (pada kepekatan rendah) natrium hidroksida dan natrium silikat. Galian sanga relau bagas sebagai sumber utama Ca^{++} telah digunakan untuk menggantikan Na^+ dalam proses geopolimerisasi. Jumlah sanga dalam campuran dikekalkan dalam lingkungan 20% hingga 70%. Penambahan sanga keatas campuran telah meningkatkan ciri-ciri kekuatan dan ketahanan serta sifat mikrostruktur. Kesan peningkatan ini disebabkan oleh hasil tindak balas campuran sebatian kalsium silikat hidrat dan kalsium aluminosilikat hidrat dan natrium aluminosilikat. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa semua campuran meningkatkan kekuatan ketara di bawah larutan alkali yang sederhana. Tambahan pula, spesimen alkali teraktif yang disediakan dengan kandungan sanga tinggi memaparkan ketahanan tinggi termasuk lelasan, pencairan-pembekuan dan pengecutan. Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa pelbagai campuran mortar berakali teraktif sebatian tenar yang dihasilkan dengan larutan alkali yang sederhana boleh menyumbang ke arah pembangunan bahan-bahan pembaikan pulih struktur konkrit yang mempunyai kekuatan yang tinggi dan tahan lama.

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	xii
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxx
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xxxii
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xxxiv
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 General Introduction	1
	1.2 Study Background	3
	1.3 Problem Statements	7
	1.4 Objectives of the Research	8
	1.5 Scopes of the Research	9
	1.6 Significance of the Research	10
	1.7 Thesis Organisation	11
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	13
	2.1 Introduction	13
	2.2 Causes of Concrete Degradation	14

2.3	Existing Surface Repair Materials	15
2.4	Alkali Activated Mortar	17
2.5	Alkali Activated Binders	21
2.5.1	Fly ash	21
2.5.1.1	Effect of Fly Ash on Fresh and Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated	22
2.5.1.2	Effect of Fly Ash on Alkali Activated Durability	23
2.5.2	Palm Oil Fuel Ash	24
2.5.2.1	Effect of POFA on Fresh and Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated	25
2.5.2.2	Effect of POFA on Alkali Activated Durability	26
2.5.3	Ground Granulated Blast-furnace Slag	27
2.5.3.1	Effect of GBFS on Fresh and Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated	27
2.5.3.2	Effect of GBFS on Alkali Activated Durability	29
2.5.4	Ceramic Waste Powder	29
2.5.4.1	Effect of CWP on Fresh and Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated	30
2.5.4.2	Effect of POFA on Alkali Activated Durability	31
2.6	Alkaline Activators	32
2.6.1	Effect of Alkaline Solution on Fresh and Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated	33
2.6.2	Effect of Alkaline Solution on Durability of Alkali Activated	37
2.7	Alkali Activated Mortar as Repair Materials	37
2.8	Constituent Materials and Preparation Methods	40
2.8.1	Binder	40
2.8.2	Aggregate	42
2.8.3	Alkali Activator Solution	42
2.9	Fresh Properties of Alkali Activated Mortars as Repair	

Materials	43
2.10 Hardened Properties of Alkali Activated Mortars as Repair Materials	44
2.10.1 Compressive Strength	44
2.10.1.1 Effect of Calcium Content	45
2.10.1.2 Effect of Sodium Hydroxide Molarity	48
2.10.1.3 Effect of Solution Types	49
2.10.1.4 Effect of Sodium Silicate to Sodium Hydroxide Ratio	50
2.10.1.5 Effect of Aggregate to Binder Ratio	51
2.10.1.6 Effect H ₂ O to Na ₂ O Ratio	51
2.10.1.7 SiO ₂ to Na ₂ O Ratio Effect	52
2.10.2 Bond Strength	53
2.10.2.1 Effect Calcium Content	54
2.10.2.2 Effect of Sodium Hydroxide Morality	57
2.10.2.3 Effect of Solution Types	57
2.10.2.4 Effect of Silicate to Aluminium Ratio	57
2.10.2.5 Effect of Solid-to-Liquid Ratio	58
2.10.2.6 Effect of Curing Humidity	59
2.10.2.7 Effect of SiO ₂ /K ₂ O Ratio	59
2.10.2.8 Bond Strength at Elevated Temperatures	60
2.10.3 Flexural Strength	60
2.10.4 Drying Shrinkage-Expansion	62
2.10.5 Abrasion Erosion Resistance	64
2.11 Microstructure	66
2.12 Failure Mode and Interface Zone between NC Substrate and repair materials	69
2.13 Compatibility between Alkali Activated Mortar and Concrete substrate	71
2.14 Durability and Sustainability	71
2.15 Environment Suitability and Safety Features	72
2.16 Merits and Demerits of Alkali Activated Mortars as Repair Materials	73
2.17 Characteristics of Various Alkali Activated Mortars	74

2.18	Summary of Research Gap Table	75
3	METHODOLOGY	82
3.1	Introduction	82
3.2	Research Flow	82
3.3	Materials Synthesis	86
3.3.1	Binder Materials	86
	3.3.1.1 Ordinary Portland cement (OPC)	87
	3.3.1.2 Ground Granulated Blast furnace Slag (GBFS)	87
	3.3.1.3 Fly Ash (FA)	88
	3.3.1.4 Plam Oil Fuel Ash (POFA)	88
	3.3.1.5 Ceramic Wastes (CWP)	91
3.3.2	Fine Aggregate	91
3.3.3	Alkaline Solution	91
3.4	Characterization of Materials	92
3.4.1	Particle Size Analyzer	93
3.4.2	X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy	94
3.4.3	Scanning Electron Microscopy	94
3.4.4	X-ray Diffraction	95
3.4.5	Termogravimetric and Differential Thermal Analyzer	95
3.4.6	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR)	96
3.5	Methods for Mix Design	96
3.5.1	Conventional OPC mortar	96
3.5.2	Ternary blend of Alkali activated Mortar Containing FA, GBFS and POFA	98
3.5.3	Ternary Blend of Alkali activated Mortar Containing CWP, GBFS and FA	98
3.6	Preparation of Specimens	99
3.6.1	Moulds	99
3.6.2	Components Mixing and Casting	99
3.6.3	Curing of Specimens	99

3.7	Fresh Properties of Alkali activated Mortar	100
3.7.1	Workability of Mortar	100
3.7.2	Setting Time	100
3.8	Hardened Properties of Alkali Mortar	101
3.8.1	Compressive Strength (ASTM C109)	101
3.8.2	Splitting Tensile Strength (ASTM C496)	102
3.8.3	Flexural Strength	102
3.8.4	Modulus of Elasticity (ASTM C469)	103
3.8.5	Bond Strength Figure	104
3.8.5.1	Slant Shear Bonding Test	104
3.8.5.2	Flexural Strength Test Figure	106
3.8.5.3	Bending Stress	106
3.8.6	Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity Test (ASTM C597)	107
3.9	Durability	108
3.9.1	Porosity Measurement (ASTM C642)	108
3.9.2	Resistance to Freezing-Thawing Cycles (ASTM C666)	110
3.9.3	Dry Shrinkage and Expansion Test (ASTM C157/ ASTM C928)	111
3.9.4	Resistance to Abrasion – Erosion (IS 1237)	112
3.9.5	Resistance to Acid Attack (ASTM C267)	113
3.9.6	Resistance to Sulphate Attack (ASTM C267)	114
3.9.7	Thermal Expansion Coefficient (ASM C884)	114

4	FORMULATION, DESIGN AND CHARACTERIZATION OF ALKALI ACTIVATED MORTAR MIXES	119
4.1	Introduction	119
4.2	Characterization of Waste Materials	120
4.2.1	Fineness and Particle Size Analysis	120
4.2.2	Specific Surface Area	121
4.2.3	Results of Characterizations	121

4.2.3.1	X- Ray Diffraction Pattern	121
4.2.3.2	SEM Analysis	122
4.2.3.3	Differential Thermal and Thermogravimetry Analysis	123
4.2.3.4	Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectral Analysis	124
4.2.4	Chemical Composition Analysis	125
4.3	Design of Trial Mixes	126
4.3.1	Effect of Low NaOH Concentration on Mixes	127
4.3.2	Effect of Na ₂ SiO ₃ to NaOH Ratio on Alkali activated Mortars Strength	129
4.3.3	Effect of Alkaline Solution to Binder Ratio on Alkali activated Mortars Strength	131
4.3.4	Effect of Binder to Fine Aggregate Ratios on Alkali activated Mortars Strength	133
4.4	Design of the Alkali activated Mortar Mix	135
4.4.1	Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA Mix Design	132
4.4.2	Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA Mix Design	134
4.5	Summary	136
5	CHARACTERIZATION OF THE FRESH AND MECHANICAL PROPERTIES OF TERNARY BLENDED ALKALI ACTIVATED MORTAR	137
5.1	Introduction	137
5.2	Flow of Alkali Activated Mortar	138
5.2.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on the Flow of Alkali activated Mortars	138
5.2.4	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP GBFS and FA on the Flow of Alkali Activated Mortars	140
5.3	Setting Time of Alkali activated Mortars	140

5.3.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS And POFA on the Setting Time of Alkali Activated Mortars	141
5.3.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS And FA on the Setting Time of Alkali Activated Mortars	143
5.4	Compressive Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	143
5.4.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on the Compressive Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	144
5.4.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on the Compressive Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	172
5.5	Splitting Tensile Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	179
5.5.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on the Splitting Tensile Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	179
5.5.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on the Splitting Tensile Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	182
5.6	Flexural Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	183
5.6.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on the Flexural Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	183
5.6.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on the Flexural Strength of Alkali Activated Mortars	187
5.7	Modulus of Elasticity of GPMs	188
5.7.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on the Modulus of Elasticity of Alkali Activated Mortars	189
5.7.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on the Modulus of Elasticity of Alkali Activated Mortars	191

5.10	Chapter Summary	193
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6	DURABILITY OF TERNARY BLENDED ALKALI ACTIVATED MORTAR	194
6.1	Introduction	194
6.2	Porosity	194
6.2.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Porosity of Alkali Activated Mortars	194
6.2.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Porosity of Alkali Activated Mortar	196
6.3	Freezing-Thawing resistance	197
6.3.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Freezing-Thawing Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	198
6.3.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Freezing-Thawing Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	215
6.4	Drying Shrinkage-Expansion resistance	219
6.4.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Dry Shrinkage-Expansion Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	220
6.4.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Dry Shrinkage-Expansion Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	224
6.5	Abrasion resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	225
6.5.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Abrasion Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	226
6.5.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Abrasion Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	229

6.6	Sulphuric Acid Resistance	231
6.6.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Acid Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	232
6.6.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Acid Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	235
6.7	Sulphate Resistance	237
6.7.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA on Sulphate Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	237
6.7.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA on Sulphate Resistance of Alkali Activated Mortars	242
6.8	Compatibility between Alkali Activated Mortars And OPC mortar substrate	244
6.9	Summary	246

7	BOND STRENGTH OF TERNARY BLEND ALKALI ACTIVATED MORTARS	247
7.1	Introduction	247
7.2	Slant Shear Bond Strength	247
7.2.1	Influence of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA	248
7.2.2	Influence of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA	252
7.3	Flexural Strength (Bond strength)	253
7.3.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA	253
7.3.2	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA	257
7.4	Bending Stress	258
7.4.1	Effect of Ternary Blend Containing FA, GBFS and POFA	258

	7.4.2 Effect of Ternary Blend Containing CWP, GBFS and FA	261
	7.5 Summary	262
8	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	263
	8.1 Introduction	263
	8.2 Conclusion on Characterization of constituent materials	263
	8.3 Trail Mixes	264
	8.4 Alkali Activated Mortar Mix Design	264
	8.5 Conclusion on Effect of High Volume FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP on Fresh Properties Alkali Activated Mortar	265
	8.6 Conclusion on Effect of High Volume FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP on Mechanical Properties Alkali Activated Mortar	266
	8.7 Conclusions on assessment of durability of the ternary Blend alkali activated mortar	267
	8.7.1 Porosity and dry shrinkage	267
	8.7.2 Resistance to Freeze/thaw	268
	8.7.3 Abrasion Resistance	269
	8.7.4 Resistance to sulfuric acid attack	269
	8.7.5 Resistance to sulphate attack	269
	8.8 Bonding strength	269
	8.9 Concluding Remarks	270
	8.10 Contributions of the Research	270
	8.11 Recommendation	270
	REFERENCES	271
	Appendices A - B	302 - 303

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Types of existing repair materials	16
2.2	Structural compatibility of repair mortars in terms of general requisites	17
2.3	Effect calcium content and NaOH concentration on setting time of Alkali Activated	43
2.4	Properties and strength of Alkali Activated	45
2.5	Compressive strength of the repair materials at various ages	48
2.6	Bond strength and failure mode of the repair materials	56
2.7	Depth of grind track of the repair materials	65
2.8	Properties of different Alkali Activated	75
2.9	Mixture designs of Alkali Activated mortars	78
2.10	Critical literature review of various important properties of Alkali Activated mortars	80
3.1	Mix information and strength properties of control sample	97
3.2	Classification of the quality of Alkali activated Mortar based on pulse velocity	107
4.1	Physical properties of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP	122
4.2	Chemical compositions of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP revealed by XRF analysis	124
4.3	Trial mixes preparation of alkali activated mortars	125
4.4	Characterics of alkaline solution for various ratios of (S:B)	127
4.5	Contents of constituents in ternary blend FA, GBFS and POFA mix design	133
4.6	Contents of constituents in ternary blend CWP, GBFS and FA mix design	135
5.1	FTIR peak positions and band assignments for Alkali activated	

	containing high volume of FA.	168
5.2	FTIR vibrational band positions and their assignment for Alkali activated containing high volume of POFA	170
5.3	FTIR band positions and assignments for Alkali activated containing high volume of GBFS	171
5.4	FTIR band positions and corresponding band assignments for Alkali activated containing high volume of CWP.	178

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Flow versus sodium hydroxide concentration in several contents of super-plasticizer and calcium hydroxide	44
2.2	Binder dependent compressive strength of Alkali Activated	46
2.3	PWA dependent compressive strengths % for different mixtures with curing age of 4 hours in an oven	47
2.4	Effect of NaOH concentration and sand to binder ratio on compressive strength of Alkali Activated	49
2.5	H ₂ O/ Na ₂ O atomic ratio dependent compressive strength of GPMs with different sand/binder mass ratios of 30% and 60% according to curing days	52
2.6	Curing time dependent compressive strength of GPM at different SiO ₂ to Na ₂ O ratio	53
2.7	Shear bond strength of Alkali Activated with interface line at 45° to the vertical	55
2.8	Shear bond strength between concrete substrate and Alkali Activated or epoxy with interface line at 45° to the vertical	56
2.9	Effect of Si/Al ratio on the bond strength at (a) ambient temperature and (b) varying temperature	58
2.10	Effect of solid-to-liquid ratio on bond strength at ambient temperature	58
2.11	SiO ₂ /K ₂ O molar ratio dependent bond strength at ambient temperature	59
2.12	Temperature dependent bond strength of various Alkalies Activated	60
2.13	Bending stress of NC notched beam with filled Alkali	

	Activated as repair materials	61
2.14	Flexural strength of Alkali Activated	62
2.15	Drying shrinkages of GPMs cured at 80 °C for 1h containing varies ratio of PWA	64
2.16	Age dependent grades of abrasion resistance of the repair materials	65
2.17	SEM images of various Alkali Activated Mortars	67
2.18	SEM of interface zone between NC substrate and GPM	68
2.19	Fracture surface between NC substrate and GPM	70
2.20	Fracture surface between NC substrate and repair materials	70
2.21	Pictorial depiction of problem statement showing the existing research gaps and solution strategies.	81
3.1	Research flow.	84
3.2	Materials preparation	84
3.3	Preliminary experimentations	85
3.4	Full scale experimentations	86
3.5	Physical appearance of (a) GBFS (b) FA (c) POFA (d) CWP (waste material).	88
3.6	Loss Angeles Abrasion machine revealing the grinding process.	89
3.7	Time dependent grinding behaviour of POFA and CWP.	90
3.8	Processing of POFA.	90
3.9	Processing steps of CWP	91
3.10	Particle size analysis of fine aggregate	92
3.11	Procedure for alkaline activator solution preparation	93
3.12	Particle size analyser	94
3.13	Procedure for Alkali Activated mixing and casting	99
3.14	Equipment for flow test of Alkali Activated Mortars	102
3.15	Procedure of prepare 30° slant shear specimens	105
3.16	Measurement of bending stress of NC notched beam with filled Alkali Activated	107
3.17	Procedure for porosity test	109
3.18	Freeze-thaw cycles test	110
3.19	Procedure of freeze-thaw cycles test	110
3.20	The specimens prepared for shrinkage test and demec meter	

	used for shrinkage measurement.	111
3.21	Abrasion testing machine	113
3.22	Resistance to acid attack test	114
4.1	Particle size distribution of constituent materials	121
4.2	XRD patterns of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP	123
4.3	SEM micrograph of FA	124
4.4	TGA and DTG curves of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP	125
4.5	FTIR spectra of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP.	126
4.6	Flowchart for trial mixtures processing	128
4.7	Low NaOH concentration dependent compressive strength of Alkali activated mortars	130
4.8	Impact of $\text{Na}_2\text{SiO}_3:\text{NaOH}$ variation on the compressive strength of Alkali activated mortars	132
4.9	the S to B ratio dependent compressive strength	134
4.10	The B to A ratio dependent compressive strength of	135
5.1	Flow of Alkali Activated Mortars under the effect of high content (a) FA b) POFA (c) GBFS (d) CWP.	140
5.2	Effect of (a) FA (b) POFA (c) GBFS and (d) CWP containing on the setting time of alkali activated mortars	141
5.3	Effect of high volume FA content on the compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	145
5.4	High volume POFA content dependent compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	146
5.5	Effect of high volume GBFS on the compressive strength of alkali activated mortar	149
5.6	Comparison between the effects of FA and POFA replacing GBFS on compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	150
5.7	Effect of FA:POFA on the compressive strength of high volume GBFS alkali activated mortars	151
5.8	Effect of $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ and $\text{CaO}:\text{SiO}_2$ on the high volume (a) FA (b) POFA (c) GBFS (d) CWP alkali activated mortars compressive strength after 28 days	152
5.9	XRD pattern of alkali activated containing high volume FA	154
5.10	XRD pattern of POFA replaced GBFS in alkaline activator	

	containing 50% FA	155
5.11	XRD pattern of alkali activated containing high volume of POFA	156
5.12	XRD pattern of alkali activated containing high volume GBFS replaced FA	157
5.13	XRD pattern of alkali activated containing high volume of GBFS replaced POFA	158
5.14	Effect of POFA replaced FA on compressive strength of alkali activated containing 70% GBFS	159
5.15	Effect of POFA replaced FA on compressive strength of alkali activated containing 50% GBFS	160
5.16	SEM images of alkali activated containing high volume of FA	161
5.17	SEM images of POFA replaced GBFS in alkali activated containing 60% FA	162
5.18	SEM of alkali activated containing high volume POFA	163
5.19	SEM images revealing the effect of high volume GBFS on alkali activated surface morphology	164
5.20	SEM images of alkali activated mortar revealing the effect of POFA replaced FA with 70% GBFS	166
5.21	FTIR fingerprint zone results of alkali activated blend with high volume of FA	169
5.22	FTIR spectra for alkali activated (fingerprint zone) containing high volume POFA.	170
5.23	FTIR fingerprint zone of alkali activated containing high volume of GBFS.	172
5.24	High volume CWP content dependent compressive strength of alkali activated mortar.	173
5.25	XRD patterns showing the effect of high volume CWP on the compressive strength of alkali activated mortars.	174
5.26	XRD patterns showing the high content effect of FA replaced GBFS on the compressive strength of alkali activated mortars.	175

5.27	SEM images of alkali activated mortars containing high volume of CWP.	176
5.28	SEM images depicting the effect of FA replaced GBFS on the surface morphology of alkali activated mortars containing 50% CWP	177
5.29	FTIR spectra of alkali activated mortar in the fingerprint zone for high volume CWP content.	178
5.30	High volume FA content dependent splitting tensile strength of alkali activated mortars at various ages.	180
5.31	High volume POFA content dependent splitting tensile strength of alkali activated mortar at various ages	181
5.32	Splitting tensile strength of alkali activated mortars containing high volume GBFS at various ages	182
5.33	High volume CWP content dependent splitting tensile strength of alkali activated mortars at different ages	183
5.34	High volume FA content dependent flexural strength of alkali activated mortars at various ages	184
5.35	High volume POFA content dependent flexural strength of alkali activated mortars at different ages	185
5.36	Flexural strength of alkali activated mortar at different ages containing high volume of GBFS	187
5.37	Flexural strength of alkali activated mortars for high volume CWP content at different ages	188
5.38	Values of MOE for ternary blend alkali activated containing high volume of (a) FA (b) POFA (c) GBFS (d) CWP	190
6.1	Porosity of various ternary blend alkali activated mortars	197
6.2	Effect of high volume FA on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	199
6.3	Effect of high volume FA on residual weight of alkali activated mortars	199
6.4	Effect of high volume FA on Surface texture of alkali activated mortars	200
6.5	Effect of POFA replaced GBFS on residual compressive	

	strength of 50% FA alkali activated specimens	200
6.6	Effect of POFA replaced GBFS on surface texture of 50% FA alkali activated specimens.	201
6.7	Effect of high volume FA on ultrasonic pulse velocity of alkali activated mortars.	201
6.8	Effect of POFA replaced GBFS on ultrasonic pulse velocity of 50% FA alkali activated specimens	202
6.9	Effect of POFA replaced GBFS on residual weight of 50% FA alkali activated specimens.	202
6.10	Effect of high volume POFA on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortars.	204
6.11	Effect of high volume POFA on ultrasonic pulse velocity of alkali activated mortars.	204
6.12	Effect of high volume POFA on residual weight of alkali activated.	205
6.13	Effect of high volume POFA on Surface texture of alkali activated	205
6.14	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on residual compressive strength of 50% POFA alkali activated specimens	206
6.15	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on ultrasonic pulse velocity of 50% POFA alkali activated specimens.	206
6.16	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on residual weight of 50% POFA alkali activated specimens	207
6.17	Effect of high volume GBFS on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	208
6.18	Effect of high volume GBFS on ultrasonic pulse velocity of alkali activated mortar	208
6.19	Effect of high volume GBFS on residual weight of alkali activated	209
6.20	Effect of high volume GBFS on surface texture weight of alkali activated mortars	209
6.21	Effect of high volume, GBFS on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortar	210
6.22	Effect of high volume GBFS on residual weight of alkali	

	activated	211
6.23	Effect of high volume GBFS replaced POFA on surface texture of alkali activated mortars	211
6.24	Effect of POFA replaced FA on residual compressive strength of 70% GBFS alkali activated mortars	212
6.25	Effect of POFA replaced FA on residual weight of 70% GBFS alkali activated mortars	212
6.26	Effect of POFA replaced FA on residual compressive strength of 50% GBFS alkali activated mortars	213
6.27	Effect of POFA replaced FA on residual weight of 50% GBFS alkali activated mortars	214
6.28	Effect of POFA replaced FA on surface texture of 50% GBFS alkali activated specimens	214
6.29	Effect of high volume CWP on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortars	215
6.30	Effect of high volume CWP on residual compressive strength of alkali activated mortars.	216
6.31	Effect of high volume CWP on residual weight of alkali activated	216
6.32	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on residual compressive strength of 50% GBFS alkali activated mortar	217
6.33	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on ultrasonic pulse velocity of 50% GBFS alkali activated mortar	217
6.34	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on residual weight of 50% GBFS alkali activated mortar.	218
6.35	Effect of FA replaced GBFS on Surface texture of 50% CWP alkali activated specimens	218
6.36	Variation of high volume FA dry shrinkage with curing age.	220
6.37	Variation of high volume POFA dry shrinkage with curing age	221
6.38	Variation of high volume GBFS on dry shrinkage with curing age	222
6.39	Variation of ternary blend alkali activated mortar containing FA, GBFS and POFA on expansion with curing age	223

6.40	Variation of high volume CWP on dry shrinkage with curing age	224
6.41	Effect of high volume FA on grind depth of alkali activated specimens	227
6.42	Effect of high volume POFA on grind depth of alkali activated specimens	228
6.43	Effect of high volume GBFS on grind depth of alkali activated specimens	229
6.44	Effect of high volume CWP on grind depth of alkali activated specimens.	230
6.45	Residual compressive strength of high volume FA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	232
6.46	Weight loss of high volume FA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	232
6.47	Residual compressive strength of high volume POFA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution.	233
6.48	Weight loss of high volume POFA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	234
6.49	Residual compressive strength and weight loss of high volume GBFS alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	235
6.50	Residual compressive strength of high volume CWP alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	236
6.51	Weight loss of high volume CWP alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% H ₂ SO ₄ solution	237
6.52	Residual compressive strength of high volume FA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	238
6.53	Reading of (a) UPV (b) weight loss of high volume	

	FA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	239
6.54	Residual compressive strength of high volume FA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	239
6.55	Weight loss of high volume POFA alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	240
6.56	Residual strength and weight loss of high volume GBFS alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	241
6.57	Residual compressive strength of high volume CWP alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	243
6.58	Reading of (a) UPV (b) weight loss of high volume CWP alkali activated specimens after immersion in 10% MgSO ₄ solution	244
6.59	Percentage of de-bonded ternary blend alkali activated mortars containing FA, GBFS and POFA after five freeze-thaw cycles	245
6.60	Percentage of de-bonded ternary blend alkali activated mortars containing CWP, GBFS and FA after five freeze-thaw cycles	245
7.1	Slant shear bond strength 30° of high volume FA alkali activated specimens	249
7.2	Slant shear bond strength 45° of high volume (a) FA (b) POFA (c) GBFS (d) CWP alkali activated specimens	249
7.3	Failure zone of high volume FA alkali activated mortars under slant shear bond test	250
7.4	The 30° slant shear bond of high volume POFA alkali activated specimens	251
7.5	The 30° slant bond strength of high volume (a) 70% GBFS (b) 60% GBFS (c) 50 % GBFS (d) CWP alkali activated specimens	252

7.6	Four points load flexural strength of high volume CWP alkali activated specimens as repair materials.	254
7.7	Failure pattern of high volume FA alkali activated specimens under flexural strength test	254
7.8	Three and four point flexure POFA, GBFS and CWP	255
7.9	Failure pattern of high volume GBFS alkali activated specimens under flexural strength test	257
7.10	Bending stress of NC notched beam with filled high volume FA containing alkali activated as repair materials	259
7.11	Bending stress of OPC notched beam with filled high volume (a) POFA (b) GBFS (c) CWP alkali activated mortars as repair materials	261

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASTM	-	American Society for Testing and Materials
BET	-	Brunauer Emmett Teller
BS	-	British Standard
CWP	-	Waste Ceramic Materials
DTA	-	Differential Thermal Analysis
Eq	-	Equation
FA	-	Fly Ash
FTIR	-	Fourier Transformed Infrared
GBFS	-	Ground Granulated Blast Furnace Slag
GP	-	Geopolymer
IS	-	Indian Standards
LOI	-	Loss on Ignition
MK	-	Metakaolin
MOE	-	Modulus of Elasticity
Ms	-	Silica Modulus
NC	-	Concrete Substrate
NH	-	Sodium Hydroxide Solution
NHNS	-	Sodium Hydroxide and Sodium Silicate Solution
NS	-	Sodium Silicate
OPC	-	Ordinary Portland Cement
POFA	-	Palm Oil Fuel Ash
RHS	-	Rice Husk Ash
SEM	-	Scanning Electron Micrograph
TGA	-	Thermogravimetry Analysis
UPV	-	Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity
XRD	-	X-Ray Diffraction
XRF	-	X-Ray Fluorescenc

LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	-	Cross section area of specimen
Al	-	Alumina
Al ₂ O ₃	-	Aluminium oxide
B	-	Binder
B:A	-	Binder to aggregate ratio
Ca	-	Calcium
Ca(OH) ₂	-	Calcium hydroxide
CaO	-	Calcium oxide
CaO:SiO ₂	-	Calcium to silicate ratio
C-A-S-H	-	Calcium aluminium silicate hydrate
C-A-S-H	-	Calcium aluminium silicate hydrate
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
C-S-H	-	Calcium silicate hydrate
<i>fb</i>	-	Bond strength
<i>fc</i>	-	Compressive strength
Fe	-	Iron
<i>F_s</i>	-	Flexural strength
<i>F_t</i>	-	Tensile strength
H ₂ SO ₄	-	Sulphuric acid
Hrs	-	Hours
KOH	-	Potassium hydroxide
MgSO ₄	-	Magnesium sulphate
MPa	-	Mega pascal
NaOH	-	Sodium hydroxide
Na ₂ O	-	Sodium oxide
Na ₂ SO ₃	-	Sodium silicate

NH:NS	-	Sodium hydroxide to sodium silicate ratio
<i>P</i>	-	Porosity
PSA	-	Particles size analysis
S:B	-	Solution to binder ratio
Si	-	Silicon
SiO ₂	-	Silicate oxide
SiO ₂ :Al ₂ O ₃	-	Silicate to aluminium ratio
Θ	-	Theta

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	Chemical composition of various geopolymer mortars	302
B	List of Publications	303

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Over the years, Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) has been widely employed as concrete binder and various building substances worldwide. It is known that, large scale manufacturing of OPC causes serious pollution in the environment in terms of considerable amount of greenhouse gases emission (Duxson *et al.*, 2007c; Rashad *et al.*, 2013). The OPC production alone is accountable for nearly 6 to 7% of total CO₂ emissions as estimated by International Energy Agency (IEA) (Palomo *et al.*, 2011). In fact, among all the greenhouse gases approximately 65% of the global warming is ascribed to the CO₂ emission. It was predicted that the mean temperature of globe could raise by approximately 1.4–5.8 °C over the next 100 years (Rehan and Nehdi, 2005). Globally, in the present backdrop of CO₂ emissions mediated climate change, the sea level is expected to rise and the frequent occurrence of natural disasters will cause huge economic loss (Stern, 2007). On top, the emitted greenhouse gases such as CO₂, SO₃ and NO_x from the cement manufacturing industries can cause acid rain and damage the soil fertility (Zhang *et al.*, 2011). Generally, the industrial consumption of raw materials is around 1.5 tonnes per each tonne of OPC production (Rashad, 2013b). To surmount such problems, both scientists, engineers and industrial personnel have been continuously dedicating many efforts to develop novel construction materials to achieve alternate binders (Rashad, 2013a).

The term “geopolymers” was coined by Joseph Davidovits in 1972 (Komnitsas and Zaharaki, 2007) to describe the zeolite like polymers. Geopolymers

that are being commonly synthesized by activating slag, fly ash (FA), calcined clay and other aluminosilicate materials using alkali have been realized as promising alternative binders. Geopolymers are the alumino-silicate polymers which consist of three dimensional amorphous structures formed due to the geopolymerization of alumino-silicate monomers in alkaline solution (Rowles and O'connor, 2003). In the past, intensive studies have been carried out on calcined clays (metakaolin) or industrial wastes such as FA, palm oil fuel ash and slag (Chang, 2003; Kong *et al.*, 2007; Temuujin *et al.*, 2010b). Yet, the complex process so called geopolymerization is not fully understood (Yao *et al.*, 2009). Davidovits proposed a reaction pathway involving the polycondensation of orthosialiate ions (hypothetical monomer) (Provis *et al.*, 2005). The mechanism of geopolymerization process (Dimas *et al.*, 2009) is based on three steps: (i) dissolution in alkaline solution, (ii) reorganization and diffusion of dissolved ions with the formation of small coagulated structures and (iii) polycondensation of soluble species to form hydrated products. In recent years the name of alkali-activated has been used to replace the geopolymer name for a matrix using calcium in geopolymerization process.

Compared to OPC, alkali activated mortars are well-known for their excellent properties such as high compressive strength (Burciaga-Díaz *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2010a), low shrinkage (Chi *et al.*, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2010a), acid resistance (Palomo *et al.*, 1999), fire resistance, devoid of toxic fumes emission (Duxson *et al.*, 2007c), low thermal conductivity (Zhang *et al.*, 2010a), excellent heavy metal immobilization, high temperature stability (Yao *et al.*, 2009), low manufacturing energy consumption for construction purposes and several engineering applications (Zhang *et al.*, 2010a). Owing to these distinctive features, Geopolymers are potentially being used in construction engineering, fire proof, biomaterials and waste treatment (Davidovits, 2002; Yao *et al.*, 2009). New applications including the use of Geopolymer as concrete repair material is under in-depth exploration.

In recent times, use of the alkali activated mortar as surface concrete repair materials has generated renewed research interests (Balaguru, 1998; Zhang *et al.*, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2010b). In the exploitation of the alkali activated mortar as repair material, the bond strength between the substrate concrete and the repair material (Geissert *et al.*, 1999b; Momayez *et al.*, 2005) plays a decisive role. Alkali activated

mortar is compatible with Portland cement concrete because of the close match of various properties such as the modulus of elasticity, Poisson's ratio, and the tensile strength (Hardjito *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, alkali activated mortar can also cure at ambient temperature as conventional concrete (Nath and Sarker, 2015). All these merits make alkali activated mortar an excellent candidate for surface concrete repair. Despite much research, the durability of these applications has not been evaluated comprehensively.

Commercial repair materials due to their good mechanical properties and bonding strengths are generally used for the repair work in concrete (Mirza *et al.*, 2014). However, they are rather expensive. Thus, less expensive alternative repair materials with comparable properties are needed. Constant research efforts are made (Hu *et al.*, 2008; Pacheco-Torgal *et al.*, 2008a; Suksiripattanapong *et al.*, 2015) to utilize alkali activated mortar as repair material, where tests are performed to determine their slant shear, pull-out, direct shear and bond strength between mortar substrate and alkali activated mortars. Interestingly, alkali activated mortar exhibits higher bonding strength than that of Portland cement mixture. Pacheco-Torgal *et al.* (2008a) determined the bond strength between concrete substrate and alkali activated mortar produced from tungsten mine waste containing calcium hydroxide. They found that Alkali activated binders have very high bond strength even at an early age as compared to commercial repair products. Suksiripattanapong *et al.* (2015) tested the bond strength between rebar and concrete substrate using geopolymer paste as the bonding agent. They reported that the bond strengths of rice husk ash and silica fume geopolymer paste are approximately 1.5 times higher than epoxies. Consequently, the occurrence of sufficiently high bond strength of geopolymer materials made them suitable alternative bonding material for repairing.

1.2 Study Background

The surfaces of concrete structures such as sidewalks, pavements, parking decks, bridges, runways, canals, dykes, dams, spillways. to cite a few deteriorate progressively due to varieties of physical, chemical, thermal and biological processes. Actually, the durability of concrete structure is strongly influenced by the inappropriate use of materials, physical and chemical conditioning of the surroundings. The immediate consequence is the anticipated need of maintenance and execution of repairs (Alanazi *et al.*, 2016). For the repair and maintenance, several expensive surface repair mortars are easily available commercially. They are constantly being used without prior laboratory testing. Earlier, many materials including cement mortars, polymer-modified cement-based mortars containing styrene butadiene rubber (SBR) and acrylics, sand epoxy mortars and emulsified epoxy mortars, have been developed to repair the damaged concrete surfaces. These repair materials are often sold in the market with the promise of achieving wonderful results (Pacheco-Torgal *et al.*, 2014).

Information on most of these commercially available products has always been inadequate and thus the manufacturers are unable to supply specific data on these mortars' resistance to the harsh conditions exist in many parts of the globe. Even though some data on the performance of these repair materials are provided by the suppliers and the manufacturers, the values are generally given based on the laboratory ambient temperature of 21 ± 1 °C. Insufficient evaluation work on the important laboratory or field has ever been made public to determine the effectiveness of these repair materials, especially at severe hot and cold climatic conditions. Further, the practising engineers find difficulties to select the right product for the particular repairing purpose. Certainly, there is a need to select appropriate materials for repairing the deteriorated concrete surfaces of various structures.

It is worth noting that millions of tons of natural, industrial and agriculture wastes such as FA, coal and oil-burning by-products, bottom ash, palm-oil fuel ash (POFA), rice-husk ash, bagasse ash, used tires, cement dust, stone crushers dust, marble dust, waste ceramic materials (CWP), silica fume, are wasted every year in Malaysia. These waste materials cause severe environmental problems like air pollution and leaching of toxic chemicals. Several studies revealed that many of

these wastes can be used successfully in all kinds of new concrete structures by replacing cement (sometimes up to 70%) (Lim *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, these newly developed concrete can provide environmentally safe, stable, more durable and low cost green construction materials. Yet, development of different Alkali activated mortars containing these wastes which can be used as repair materials, especially for deteriorated concrete surfaces are rarely explored.

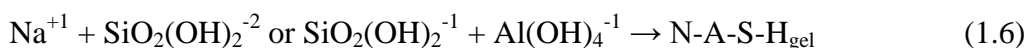
As aforementioned, geopolymerization is a complex and important process in the alkali activated industry, where high pH alkaline solution that is used to dissolve the aluminosilicates is still to be clarified. The term “alkali activator solution” is used for a combination of a silica-rich solutions (e.g. sodium or potassium silicate) and highly concentrated alkali solutions (e.g. sodium or potassium hydroxide) with certain weight ratios. Such combination is used to dissolve the alumina-silicate from pozzolanic waste materials for building the amorphous structure of Alkali activated. An increase in the ratio of silica-rich solution to alkali solution enhances the possibility of geopolymerization because of high amount of SiO₂. For various aluminosilicate sources, it has been authenticated that availability of SiO₂ is a key factor to determine mechanism of geopolymerization (De Vargas *et al.*, 2011).

Even though the knowledge regarding the mechanisms that control the alkali activation process is considerably advanced but many things need further investigations. The study of alkali activation of aluminosilicates is a relatively a new research domain as compared to traditional Portland cement-based systems. Alkali-activated aluminosilicates are differentiated from hydrated Portland cements by their higher initial alkalinity and the absence of lime. This is quite different hydration products from the diverse systems. Thus, the predictions on the properties of alkali-activated aluminosilicates that are made based on Portland cement chemistry remain inappropriate. Whereas the main binding phase of hydrated Portland cement is an aluminate substituted calcium silicate hydrate (C-(A)-S-H) gel and the main product in alkali activated systems is sodium aluminosilicate hydrate gel designated (N-A-S-H). Thus, it is significant to determine the detail mechanism of (N-A-S-H) formation.

Recent research indicated that the amount of calcium content in the FA have significant impact on the resultant hardened geopolymer. Most of the earlier studies revealed promising results (Phoo-ngernkham *et al.*, 2015b). Calcium oxide is believed to form calcium silicate hydrate (C-S-H) together with the aluminosilicate geopolymer gel. Main challenge for wide application of aluminosilicate materials based geopolymer is the requirement of curing at elevated temperature. Earlier, researchers have attempted to enhance the reactivity of these materials by adding some calcium containing substances (Al-Majidi *et al.*, 2016). The addition of calcium oxide (CaO) allowed forming the hydrated products such as C-S-H together with the alumino-silicate geopolymer network. The amount of CaO content of the precursor materials is found to have considerable influence on the resultant hardened geopolymer. Meanwhile, an increase in the strength and a decrease in the setting time are observed with increasing CaO content.

The compatibility of the two cementitious gels so called C-(A)-S-H and N-A-S-H has important implications for hybrid Portland cement as well alkali activated aluminosilicate systems, where both products might be expected (Yip *et al.*, 2005). Previous studies used the synthetic gels to determine the effects of the constituents of each gel on the other such as the high pH conditions. The presence of aqueous aluminate is found to strongly influence C-S-H composition and structure (Garcia-Lodeiro *et al.*, 2011). Besides, the aqueous Ca modified the N-A-S-H gels and led to a partial replacement of sodium with calcium to form C-A-S-H and N-A-S-H gels (Garcia-Lodeiro *et al.*, 2011) as explained using the following reactions. Despite these observations, the conditions required for such modifications have not been fully defined. Furthermore, to explore the possibility of constructional cements having both gels co-existing, a systematic study of N-A-S-H and C-A-S-H compatibility seems essential. The process of producing the C-S-H, C-A-S-H and N-A-S-H gels has been explained in equation (1.1 to 1.6).





1.3 Problem Statements

Most of the commercial repair materials owing to their low durability and sustainability perform poorly under severe hot and cold climatic conditions. Although few epoxy repair materials display good performance but they are somewhat costly. Geopolymer prepared from the waste materials with high content of aluminium-silicate and alkaline activator solution has emerged as a leading repair material. Geopolymeric binders are preferred because they generate 70-80% lesser CO₂ with remarkably reduced greenhouse gas emissions than Portland cement. However, new binders are prerequisite for enhanced durability performance, better sustainability, reduced cost and environmental affability.

Currently, intensive researches on the alkali activated mortar as emerging construction material have been undertaken, where most studies revealed that an elevated concentration of sodium hydroxide and high ratio of sodium silicate to sodium hydroxide ≥ 2.5 are preferred for the production of high performance alkali activated mortars. Sodium silicate is known to impact negatively on the environment. Besides additional cost, high concentration of sodium hydroxide has negative effect on the environment and remains hazardous to the workers. High molarity of sodium hydroxide and enriched sodium silicate in alkaline solution content are the major problems for the usage of alkali activated mortar as new construction materials, especially for repairing. This is a serious concern for the environmental safety because it is a mineral based material with relatively high demand for sodium silicate during synthesis. These deficiencies caused by alkaline solution limits the diversified use of geopolymer in the construction industry.

Several studies are carried out on the materials containing calcium compounds especially ground granulated blast furnace slag (GBFS). However, most

of these studies used high volumes and concentrations of corrosive sodium silicate and/or sodium hydroxide to achieve geopolymer products, which posed health and safety issues of workers during handling. Davidovits et al. (Davidovits, 2013) proposed a user friendly method for geopolymer production to improve the strength, reduce the costs by avoiding thermal activation and promote an easier handling mechanism. So far, no studies are made on the mechanical performance of 'user friendly' alkali activated, only the mineralogical and microstructure analyses of the geopolymer cement paste have been conducted.

Pacheco-Torgal et al. (2008b) established two models of alkali-activated binding systems. First one is related to the alkali activation of Si + Ca systems including GBFS with mild alkaline media to form C-A-S-H gel as main product. Second model deals with the alkaline activation of Si + Al system such as FA and metakaolin that requires a medium with strong alkaline to form N-A-S-H gel as the main product. Therefore, potential production procedure of alkali activated mortar need to be developed where low alkaline solution concentration (low sodium hydroxide molarity and low amount of sodium silicate) must be used by combining the effect of slag, high alumium and silicate content materials including FA, POFA and CWP with varying ratios of $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{CaO}:\text{SiO}_2$ and $\text{CaO}:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$. Consequently, the present study intends to develop an environmental friendly and low cost alkali activated mortar with broad arrays of applications in the construction industry.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of GBFS on fresh, mechanical and durable properties of ternary blended alkali activated mortars containing FA and POFA or CWP activated with low concentration of sodium hydroxide and sodium silicate. Based on the aim of the study and the above mentioned problem statement the following objectives are set:

- i. To characterize the microstructures, physical and chemical properties of FA, POFA, GBFS and CWP constituents to develop a mixture proportion of ternary blended alkali activated mortars with enhanced durability.
- ii. To determine the fresh and hardened properties of synthesized ternary blend alkali activated mortars.
- iii. To evaluate the durability performance of ternary-blend alkali activated mortars.
- iv. To compare the bonding properties of ternary blend alkali activated mortars with normal OPC mortar substrate.

1.5 Scopes of the Research

This research (experimental) focuses on the feasibility of achieving a new alkali activated mortars with improved mechanical properties and enhanced durability. This new ternary blend alkali activated mortars can be achieved by combining FA, GBFS and POFA or CWP with appropriate proportions. The effects of various concentration ratios of blends, molarities, on the durability and mechanical properties of synthesized alkali activated mortars are examined. Different tests are performed to characterize the prepared alkali activated mortars. Materials characterizations are performed in terms of physical properties, chemical properties and mineralogical compositions. To obtain the optimum ternary blend, tests on the properties of various ternary blended mixes are carried out with varying replacement levels, the minimum content of slag (kept up to 20% by weight) and constant alkaline solution binder ratio of 0.40. Molarity of sodium hydroxide and the ratio of sodium silicate to sodium hydroxide are kept constant of 4 M and 0.75, respectively. The properties considered are mortar flow as well as compressive strength, flexural strength and porosity after ambient-cured for up to 365 days. The achieved optimum multi blend is further used for detail investigations on fresh and hardened properties, microstructures and durability. In addition, different proportions of $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{CaO}:\text{SiO}_2$ and $\text{CaO}:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ are used for the production of optimum mortar.

In the fresh state, the setting times, standard consistency and flowability of the optimized ternary blend are determined. Conversely, in the hardened state the compressive strength, splitting tensile, flexural, dry shrinkage, bond strength, microstructures and durability properties for up to 6 months are evaluated. The durability is assessed in terms of resistance of magnesium sulphate, sulphuric acid attack, freezing-thawing, abrasion-erosion resistance. Microstructure of alkali activated mortar is characterized using the Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA), X-ray Diffraction (XRD), Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) and Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) measurements. The series of tests are conducted based on the procedures of British Standards (BS) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). International Union of Laboratories and Experts in Construction Materials, Systems and Structures is adopted in reviewing the literature. As these methods are being well established has enabled a comparison with related studies with information on their precision known.

In addition to compressive strength and porosity, the amount of CaO is varied for assessing the microstructure of the optimized alkali activated mortars specimens in the hardened state. Meanwhile, residual compressive strength, residual mass and expansion are used as parameters for measuring the resistance of specimens to sulphuric acid, magnesium and sulphate attacks. All the results are analysed and presented in the form of graphs and output plots from the XRD, TGA, DTG, and FTIR tests. The findings are validated and compared with similar relevant existing studies whenever available in the literature.

1.6 Significance of the Research

As abovementioned, this research intends to generate new information on the use of ternary blend alkali activated mortars by means of systematic methods of sample preparation from waste materials economically, appropriate and careful materials characterizations, and subsequent data analyses useful for the development of standard specifications for ternary blend alkali activated mortars system for diversified practical applications. This generated knowledge is expected to contribute

to the development of environmental friendly and inexpensive geopolymer material for wide range of applications in the construction industry. This would be greatly beneficial for sustainable development of Malaysia, where wastes disposal problems towards the land filling can be avoided and minimized. The outcome of the study is believed to provide the basis for further researches and better understanding of the behaviour of a ternary blend alkali activated mortar obtainable from the waste material in a cheap and environmental affable manner.

1.7 Thesis Organisation

Chapter 1 : renders a general background as well as concrete rationale for conducting this study. In addition, a brief explanation of the problem background by emphasizing the need of better repair materials and development of new alkali activated mortars, aims and objectives, scope and limitations, and importance of this study are depicted.

Chapter 2 comprehensively reviews the existing relevant literature and describes the properties of alkali activated mortar as well as pozzolanic materials. It also outlines the review of previous studies on used geopolymer mortars as repair material for fixing damaged concretes. Although, there few or no literature available on friendly alkali activated mortar using low molarity of sodium hydroxide and low content of sodium silicate as alkaline solution.

Chapter 3 emphasizes a comprehensive description of the materials and sample synthesis methods together with the test used for characterizing the samples. Basic principle of various tests is underscored useful for the evaluation of alkali activated mortars performance.

Chapter 4 highlights the physical and chemical characteristics of FA class F, POFA, GBFS and CWP. The outcomes on the optimization of ternary blend alkali activated mortar and the in-depth discussions are underlined.

Chapter 5 presents the significant experimental outcomes and discussions on the fresh and hardened properties of alkali activated mortar, where the microstructure properties of the optimized ternary blend alkali activated mortars are analysed and discussed. The results on the properties of alkali activated mortars studied in its fresh state are the workability/flow, and setting time. At the hardened state, the results on characteristics of alkali activated mortars presented are the compressive strength, splitting tensile strength, flexural strength, and modulus of elasticity. A relationship between ($\text{SiO}_2:\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$) and compressive strength of alkali activated mortar is established. Furthermore, SEM images and XRD spectra of the ternary blended alkali activated mortars revealing the microstructure is analyzed and the mechanisms of the formation is understood.

Chapter 6 depicts the results on porosity, chemical attack, freezing-thawing and abrasion-erosion resistance tests of the ternary blended alkali activated mortars.

Chapter 7 emphasizes the basic insight on the bond strength between conventional mortar and ternary blend alkali activated mortars. An evaluation of the durability of synthesized alkali activated mortars is presented. The applications of the achieved alkali activated mortars as repair material are assessed.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis and makes some recommendations for further researches in ternary blend alkali activated mortars using waste materials.

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