



Faculty of Mechanical Engineering

**DEVELOPMENT OF NANOFIBER-COATED
CABIN AIR FILTER FOR ENHANCING
FILTRATION PERFORMANCE**

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Master of Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)

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**DEVELOPMENT OF NANOFIBER-COATED CABIN AIR FILTER FOR
ENHANCING FILTRATION PERFORMANCE**

AHMAD SHAHIZAM BIN ABD RAHIM

**A report submitted
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)**

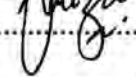
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering

UNIVERSITI TEKNIKAL MALAYSIA MELAKA

2016

DECLARATION

I declare that this report entitled "Development of Nanofiber-Coated Cabin Air Filtration Performance" is the results of my own research except as cited references. The report has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrent in candidature of any other degree.


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APPROVAL

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Date : 24/11/2016

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved wife *Rafidah binti Mohamad Zaham*

My sons and daughters,

Ahmad Azfar Sufi, Ahmad Azhar Yusof, Afifah Zahidah and Aina Maisarah

My father and mother,

Haji Abd Rahim bin Yeop Saïd and Hajjah Zaleha binti Abdullah

My siblings,

Ahmad Shahrnizar, Ahmad Shahril Azwan, Ahmad Shazri, Ahmad Shukri,

Ahmad Zharif and Amira

For your endless love, support and encouragement

You have successfully made me the person I am becoming.

ABSTRACT

In these days, the quality of vehicle's cabin air has become one of the health concerns among consumers. Typical air filters used in an air conditioning system of a vehicle are made of fiber materials such as fiberglass and polymeric materials. Nanofibers have a potential to be used as high efficient filter materials due to their nanoscale diameters. Manufacturers claim that filters made of nanofibers can trap dusts or particles with 99.99% efficiency. However, there is limited information available on the effectiveness of electrospun nanofiber filter media in filtering submicron particulates. Therefore, this study is aimed at developing and studying the performance of nanofiber-coated filters in filtering submicron particles. The filters were incorporated with electrospun nanofibers at 10kV of applied voltage and 10 cm spinning distance. The coated filters were tested at varying collection times ranging from 1 to 10 minutes. The filter samples were tested using a dedicated test rig to simulate an actual air conditioning system. Particle Counter (PM) measurement technique was used in measuring air particle concentration (m^3) across the filter. The morphology of the nanofiber coated filters was analyzed using Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) micrographs. It was observed that electrospun nanofibers have diameters ranging from 104 nm to 117 nm. The nanofiber coated filters showed a significant improvement of around 33% in efficiency when the electrospinning collection time was 10 minutes compared to control samples. The study revealed that a longer electrospinning collection time produced a thicker layer of nanofibers producing filters with higher filtration efficiency for capturing fine particles.

ABSTRAK

masa kini, kualiti udara kabin kenderaan telah menjadi salah satu kebimbangan di kalangan pengguna. Penapis udara biasa digunakan dalam sistem pengudaraan kenderaan yang diperbuat dari bahan mikrofiber seperti gentian kaca dan biopolimer. Serat nano mempunyai potensi yang besar untuk digunakan sebagai lapisan bercekapan tinggi kerana ia mempunyai diameter berskala nano. Penyelidik mendakwa bahawa penapis diperbuat daripada serat nano boleh memerangkap zarah-zarah dengan kecekapan sehingga 99.99%. Walau bagaimanapun, maklumat yang sedia ada amat terhad mengenai keberkesanan media penapis semburan serat nano untuk menapis zarah submikron. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk membangunka kajian prestasi penapis bersalut serat nano untuk menapis zarah submikron. Penapis bersalut tersebut dihasilkan berdasarkan masa koleksi electrospinning antara 1 hingga 10 minit. Sampel penapis telah diuji menggunakan ujian khusus untuk mensimulasikan sistem pengudaraan kabin. Partikel Particulate Matter (PM) telah digunakan bagi mengukur kepekatan zarah (mg/m^3) yang melalui penapis. Morfologi penapis bersalut serat nano dianalisis menggunakan mikroskop Imbasan Elektron (SEM). Adalah diperhatikan bahawa penapis serat nano mempunyai diameter di antara 104 nm hingga 110 nm. Penapis bersalut serat nano menunjukkan peningkatan kecekapan yang ketara iaitu sebanyak 33% apabila masa koleksi electrospinning adalah 10 minit berbanding dengan 1 minit. Kajian ini juga mendedahkan bahawa masa koleksi electrospinning yang lebih panjang menghasilkan lapisan serat nano yang tebal menjadikan penapis mempunyai kecekapan penapisan yang lebih tinggi untuk memerangkap zarah halus.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
DECLARATION	
APPROVAL	
DEDICATION	
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Project Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Objectives	4
1.4 Scope of Work	4
1.5 Significance of Study	5
1.6 Overview of Thesis	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 The Need of Air Filter	6
2.1.1 Particle Classification	7
2.1.2 Basic Filtration Mechanism	9
2.2 Cabin Air Filtration	10
2.2.1 Type of cabin air filter	10
2.3 Nanofiber Production Method	13
2.3.1 Electrospinning	13
2.3.2 The Island in the Sea	15
2.3.3 The Melt Blown	15
2.4 Measurement of Particulate Matter (PM)	17
2.4.1 Concentration Methods	18
2.4.1.1 Gravimetric Method	18
2.4.1.2 Optical Method	18
2.4.1.3 Microbalance Method	19
2.4.2 Size Distribution Methods	20
2.5 Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	20
2.5.1 Recent Development in Nanofibrous Filtration Technologies	21

3. METHODOLOGY	25
3.1 Overview of the Experiment	25
3.1.1 Experimental Work Flow Chart	25
3.2 Electrospinning Set Up	27
3.2.1 Electrospinning Apparatus	28
3.2.2 Polymer Solution Preparation	29
3.2.3 Substrate Preparation	30
3.2.4 Substrate Coating	31
3.3 Air Filtration Setup	35
3.3.1 Test Rig Apparatus	35
3.3.2 Particle Concentration Measurement	38
3.4 Stereo Microscope Apparatus and Setup	42
3.5 Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	43
3.5.1 SEM Apparatus and Setup	43
3.5.2 Sample Preparation	45
3.5.3 Filter Sample Imaging	45
3.5.4 Measurement of Nanofiber Diameter and Particles	45
4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION	49
4.1 Particle Concentration	49
4.2 Filtration Effectiveness	53
4.3 Statistics Data Analysis	56
4.3.1 Standard Deviation and Error Bars	56
4.3.2 <i>p</i> -Value	59
4.4 SEM Morphology	62
4.4.1 Nanofiber Diameter	62
4.4.2 Size of Trapped Particle	66
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	69
5.1 Conclusions	69
5.2 Recommendations	70
REFERENCES	71
APPENDICES	79

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	The particle size of common indoor air contaminants.	8
2.2	Particle and carbon type of cabin air filter advantages and limitations.	13
2.3	Advantages and disadvantages of three main nanofiber production methods.	16
3.1	Specifications of Electrospinz Model ES1a.	28
3.2	Experimental electrospinning parameters.	33
3.3	Components and specification of the filtration test rig.	36
3.4	DustTrakII Aerosol Monitor Model 8530 EP Specifications.	38
3.5	Table of mass particle concentration measurement for data collection.	41
3.6	The Zeiss Stemi Stereo Microscope Model 2000-C specifications.	42
3.7	Specifications of Scanning Electron Microscope Hitachi Model S-3400N.	44
4.1	Summarize of average data in the morning (9.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.).	50
4.2	Summarize of average data in the afternoon (2.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.).	50
4.3	Data for each set of filtration effectiveness percentage.	53
4.4	Data of standard deviation for average measurement at inlet.	57
4.5	Data of standard deviation for average measurement at outlet.	57
4.6	The <i>p</i> -Value analysis on the data obtained from Table 4.1.	60
4.7	Summary of nanofiber diameter and its uncertainty measurements.	62
4.8	Example of randomly measured particle size trapped according to coated time.	66

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	A comparison image of PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5} with human air and beach sand.	8
2.2	An illustration of air particle filtration mechanism.	9
2.3	An illustration of cabin air filter location of Toyota car model.	10
2.4	The commercially – available filter of cabin air filters.	11
2.5	Classification of Filters.	12
2.6	Enhanced carbon and particulate type of cabin filters.	12
2.7	Schematic view of electrospinning setup.	14
2.8	The forming of Taylor cone from electrospinning.	14
2.9	The islands in the sea fiber schematic.	15
2.10	The Melt Blown Schematic.	16
2.11	Methods for PM Measurement.	17
2.12	Example of SEM image for cellulose substrate air filter at magnification 1100x consists of layered nanofibers coating the substrate.	21
2.13	The ImageJ window consists of a menu bar with the Images, Histograms, Results, etc.	22
2.14	Diagram of fiber analysis algorithm DiameterJ for defining fiber diameter.	24
3.1	Flow chart of experimental work.	26
3.2	K - Chart of project implementation.	27

3.3	Components for Electrospinz Model ES1a.	28
3.4	Nylon 6 in form of pellets and formic acid.	29
3.5	Solution preparation of nylon 6 polymers by weighing the materials using (a) analytical balance machine Mettler Toledo Model Dragon 3002 and (b) the stir mixture machine IKA C-MAG Model HS 7.	30
3.6	(a) Commercially-available Perodua Viva's cabin air filter (b) flattened filter and (c) 40 mm diameter cut filter	30
3.7	The tip-to-collector distance was set at 10 cm.	31
3.8	Samples of nylon 6 electrospun nanofibers collected at different deposition times.	32
3.9	The location of the filter sample was attached to the collector plate.	33
3.10	The comparison of the filter before and after coating for 1 minute coating time.	33
3.11	Drip accumulation at the tip of the electrospinning needle that required removal.	34
3.12	Schematic diagram of the filtration test rig.	35
3.13	The fabricated filtration test rig and its components.	36
3.14	Speed controller 0-15V.	37
3.15	Desktop computer fan 240/12V.	37
3.16	DustTrakII Aerosol Monitor Model 8530 EP.	37
3.17	Air filter test rig setup.	39
3.18	Insertion of filter sample in the aluminum clamp before tightening.	40
3.19	Measurement of particle concentration at inlet point and outlet point.	40
3.20	Filter samples surface viewing with 75x magnification using Stereo Microscope.	42
3.21	Hitachi Scanning Electron Microscope Model S-3400N set up.	43

3.22	Components of Hitachi Scanning Electron Microscope Model S-3400N.	44
3.23	Measurement of the nanofiber diameters using ImageJ software.	46
3.24	A window in ImageJ software showing the setting of scale to measure the nanofiber diameter.	46
3.25	Measurement of trapped particles for 1 minute coated filter sample using ImageJ software.	48
4.1	Graph showing the declination of mass particle concentration at outlet.	52
4.2	Graph represents the average filtration effectiveness percentage	54
4.3	Graph showing both inlet and outlet error bars.	58
4.4	Setting the parameter in the <i>p</i> -Value analysis from Microsoft Excel.	60
4.5	SEM image at 20,000x which the nanofibers diameters were manually measured using ImageJ software (a), (c), (e) and its nanofiber diameter distributions (b), (d), (f) for electrospinning collection time of 1 minute, 5 minutes and 10 minutes respectively.	63
4.6	The error related when measuring the nanofiber diameter manually at two points of true edges from digital image.	65
4.7	Trapped particle for SEM images at 200x (a), (c), (e) and at 2,000x (b), (d), (f) for electrospinning collection time of 1 minute, 5 minutes and 10 minutes respectively.	68

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	Calculation of range, uncertainty in measurement and uncertainty in the average for nanofiber diameters.	79
B	Table of mass particle concentration measurement data from filtration test.	80
C	Graph of filtration effectiveness for filter set 1, set 2 and set 3.	81
D	SEM image of nanofibers with magnification 200x.	82
E	SEM image of nanofibers with magnification 2,000x.	83
F	SEM image of nanofibers with magnification 20,000x.	84
G	SEM image of conventional microfibers filter with magnification 200x.	85
H	Stereo Microscope image of conventional microfibers filter with magnification 75x.	86
I	Stereo Microscope image of nanofibers with magnification 75x.	87

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EDS	-	Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy
HEPA	-	High Efficiency Particulate Arrestance
HVAC	-	Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning
LAS	-	Laser Aerosol Spectrometer
MPP	-	Most Penetrating Particle
NIH	-	National Institutes of Health
OPC	-	Optical Particle Counters
PE	-	Polyethylene
PM	-	Particulate Matter
ppm	-	parts per million
PVC	-	Polyvinyl Chloride
QCM	-	Quartz Crystal Microbalance
SEM	-	Scanning Electron Microscope
TEOM	-	Tapered Element Oscillation Microbalance
UFP	-	Ultra Fine Particle
USB	-	Universal Serial Bus

LIST OF SYMBOLS

Au	-	Gold
PM ₁₀	-	Particulate Matter 10 µm
PM _{2.5}	-	Particulate Matter 2.5 µm
PM _{0.1}	-	Particulate Matter 0.1 µm
R	-	Range
ΔX	-	Uncertainty in measurement
ΔX _{avg}	-	Uncertainty in average
X _{max}	-	Data value maximum
X _{min}	-	Data value minimum

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

The need for air cleaning and better air filter media are becoming a huge concern nowadays due to air pollution. This includes providing cleaner air for equipment, component, personal protection aid for respirations, interior comfort environment such as vehicle cabin and building. The main function of an air filter is to collect dust, dirt and contaminants. It prevents air contaminants from reaching the equipment that can lead to higher maintenance cost as well as preventing eliminate unpleasant smells, harmful particles and dangerous gas pollutants to human.

The demand for better filter media has created new challenges towards producing high performance filters. Conventionally, filter medias are made of micro-sized cellulose, cellulose / synthetic, spunbond, or melt blown fibers. However, recent development in nanotechnology has opened up new opportunities to take advantage of nano-sized fibers for its smaller interfiber spaces or pores, offers better capability to capture more submicron particles, having high dust holding capacity, promoting lower restriction and prolong the filter life.

A cabin air filter is a vital part of a vehicle's passenger compartment heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. The filter task is to filter out the impurities and pollutants that flow in from the ambient surrounding. As a result, high air quality, better breathable atmosphere in the cabin and apparently protecting air conditioning system components from dust.

Particulate Matter or PM is a term used to describe the combination between fine liquid and solid particles available in the environment. Certain particles can be originated straightly from a particular source and others through complex chemical reactions in the atmosphere. The particles with size less than or equal to 10 micrometers is known as PM₁₀. It has the capability to travel into the deepest parts of the lung when being inhaled. This can possibly lead to serious health problem involving respiratory system. Generally, PM₁₀ is a main element of air pollution which negatively affecting both our health and our environment.

Previous studies showed that the PM concentrations in vehicle's cabin can be higher compared to other outdoor or indoor micro-environments (Geiss O. et al, 2009) and surpassed the outdoor concentration numbers by three to five times (Praml G. and Schierl R., 2000). Although initially a filter can perform its function effectively, one must not ignore the fact that as time goes by, the filter media becomes saturated with dust and particles, resulting in restricted and blockage airflow. It even worsens the situations if the passengers tend to keep the windows rolled up, consequently increasing the particle concentration, trapping further harmful fumes and particles inside the cabin. This can be a health issue concern when it affects our respiratory system especially for those who spend many hours of their time driving to work and other destinations (Lyons G. et al, 2008). Therefore, it is significant to conduct a preliminary study on the effectiveness of nanofiber integrated cabin air filter for reducing air particles.

In this study, nylon nanofibers electrospun are produced from nylon 6 in formic acid solution using electrospinning technique. Test filter medias are modified from commercially-available cabin air filter (cellulose type). Nylon nanofibers are directly being electrospun to one of the filter's surfaces. The coated filters are fabricated into several samples and classified according to their electrospinning collection time. The filters are tested at room temperature using a dedicated test jig. The amount of the air particle mass concentration across of each filter is measured using a dust monitor device.

1.2 Problem Statement

The common air filters were normally produced from material such as fiberglass and polymeric compositions such as micro-sized cellulose, cellulose / synthetic, spunbond, or melt blown fibers. It has the ability to traps airborne dust, the largest soot, and other air particles. Filters with small pore sizes are good in filtering submicron particles. Nanofibers are potentially suitable to be used as filter media or coating due to their fine diameters of several hundred of nanometers providing enormous surface area per unit mass, higher porosities and distinctive nanometers scale structures. It also offers a higher permeability to air filtration over conventional materials.

However, there is limited information available on the effectiveness of electrospun nanofiber filter media in filtering submicron particulates PM_{10} . A preliminary study need to be carried out to investigate the filtration performance of nanofiber filter medias coating on conventional filter. Consequently, by comparing the findings from of the nanofiber-coated filter with conventional filter will enable us to determine whether the coating idea is effective in promoting better reduction of submicron particles concentration of PM_{10} particles in air filtration applications.

1.3 Objectives

Based on the problem statements mentioned above, the present study is to achieve the following objective:

- a. To develop nanofiber-coated cabin air filter through nanofiber depositions based on electrospinning collection time in electrospinning process.
- b. To determine the performance of nylon 6 nanofiber-coated cabin air filters effectiveness in trapping PM_{10} particles during filtration process by means of PM measurement method.

1.4 Scope of Work

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the subsequent scopes of study have been emphasized are as follows:

- a. Fabricate a filtration test rig to allow airflow travel through the filters.
- b. Fabricate nanofiber-coated cabin air filter by nanofiber depositions based on electrospinning time collection which the filter originated from the commercial cabin air filter available in the market.
- c. Conduct the performance test of the filter using the filtration test rig to measure the filtered particle mass concentration using dust monitor with PM_{10} filter element.
- d. Characterize the filters sample using Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) imaging and ImageJ software to evaluate the sample's morphology.

1.5 Significance of Study

The significances of this research will be based on the followings as to fulfil the objectives mentioned earlier:

- a. The development of high efficient filters by integrated nanofiber mats into commercially-available cabin air filter from electrospinning process.
- b. The results should support further studies and open up new opportunities in application of other nanofiber material for air filters which enhance air filter performance and its efficiency.

1.6 Overview of Report

This report is structured into 5 chapters accordingly; Chapter 1 discusses the introduction of the report. Project background, problem statements, objectives, project scope and significance are explained in this chapter. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literatures and findings of the previous works regarding in particular the application of nanofiber in air filtration applications and the techniques to measure the filtration effectiveness. Methodology of fabricating the coated filter and its performance evaluation are shown and demonstrated in Chapter 3. In addition, the coated filter samples are also being evaluated in term of its morphology using Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) imaging. Chapter 4 discusses the data obtained from the experiment and analyses being made to justify the findings. Lastly, the conclusion and further recommendations for future works are discussed in Chapter 5 as to improve the outcomes of this project.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Need of Air Filter

Nowadays, the global awareness in reducing pollution has risen significantly. People across the world demands better solution in controlling the Particulate Matter (PM) pollution generated in the environment. The misconception of air quality in vehicle's cabin is always clean by most people were disputably by Wallace L. and Ott W. (2011) suggested that when involving a confined space usually indoor environment sources are greater than outdoor sources. Since particle concentration in vehicle's cabin can be three to five times higher compared to outside environment, a new type of filter in bringing down these figures is required. In fact, recent studies by Xu B. et al. (2015), Lee and Zhu (2014) tend towards researching better interior air filtration mechanism to cope out even with the Ultrafine Particles (UFPs) concentrations. The need of superior performance of cabin air filter will filtering the exterior air entering the passenger compartment which certainly provide better interior air quality, breathable atmosphere by controlling particle concentration in cabin and protect air conditioning system components from dust. The discomforts experienced by passengers are due to unpleasant smells, harmful particles and dangerous gas pollutants are the major area of concern when involving PM pollutants according to the main categorization of fine particle sizes for $10\ \mu\text{m}$ and $2.5\ \mu\text{m}$ (Chong L. et al., 2015). The application of ultrafine filter media particularly the nanofiber in cabin air filter is widely being used in automobile filter industry in achieving better interior air quality and comfort in vehicle cabin (Timothy H.G. et al., 2003).

2.1.1 Particle Classification

The physical attributes of airborne particulates consist of mass concentration and size distribution. Ambient levels of mass concentration are measured in micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). The particulate matter is classified on the basis of their size. The size attributes are usually measured as aerodynamic diameter of the dust particulates in terms of microns.

The airborne particle frequently distinguished into three categorizations as coarse, fine and ultrafine particles. The coarse particles PM_{10} which easily resolve are between 10 μm and 2.5 μm diameter whereas fine particles $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ will be between 0.1 μm to 2.5 μm in diameter. The ultrafine is the one with smaller than 0.1 μm in diameter particles (Peters J. et al., 2012). The particles most expected to cause adverse health effects are the fine particulates PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$. This particular size particle raised major concerns due to its virtue of their size, they can be easily inhaled and travel deep into the human lung particularly the pulmonary alveolus causing breathing problem (Simone S.A et al., 2015). For further understanding of the particle sizes, Figure 2.1 represent the comparison of PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ particles between human hair and beach sand, and Table 2.1 indicates the listing of common indoor contaminants.

In addition, particles generated during the combustion process are classified as primary particles normally are directly emitted into the atmosphere. This primary particles consists of fine particles, with diameter less than 2.5 μm ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$) and the ultrafine particles, with diameters smaller than 0.1 μm ($\text{PM}_{0.1}$) indicated by Simone S.A. et al. (2015) as cited in Obaidullah et al. (2012), Wilson et al. (2002), Wark et al. (1998), and Vincent (2007). On the contrary, the secondary particles which are classified as coarse particles, have diameters greater than 2.5 μm or particulate matter smaller than 10 μm in diameter (PM_{10}) is created by mechanical or chemical reactions in the atmosphere.