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48	Abstract	<p>This paper aims to determine the flexural stiffness and strength of a composite made of a polylactic acid reinforced with wood particles, named commercially as Timberfill, manufactured through fused filament fabrication (FFF). The influence of four factors (layer height, nozzle diameter, fill density, and printing velocity) is studied through an L_{27} Taguchi orthogonal array. The response variables used as output results for an analysis of variance are obtained from a set of four-point bending tests. Results show that the layer height is the most influential parameter on flexural strength, followed by nozzle diameter and infill density, whereas the printing velocity has no significant influence. Ultimately, an optimal parameter set that maximizes the material's flexural strength is found by combining a 0.2-mm layer height, 0.7-mm nozzle diameter, 75% fill density, and 35-mm/s velocity. The highest flexural resistance achieved experimentally is 47.26 MPa. The statistical results are supported with microscopic photographs of fracture sections, and validated by comparing them with previous studies performed on non-reinforced PLA material, proving that the introduction of wood fibers in PLA matrix reduces the resistance of raw PLA by hindering the cohesion between filaments and generating voids inside it. Lastly, five solid Timberfill specimens manufactured by injection molding were also tested to compare their strength with the additive manufactured samples. Results prove that treating the wood-PLA through additive manufacturing results in an improvement of its resistance and elastic properties, being the Young's module almost 25% lower than the injected material.</p>	
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49	Keywords separated by ' - '	Additive manufacturing - 3D printing - Fused filament fabrication - Young's module - Flexural strength - Timberfill	

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Experimental analysis of manufacturing parameters' effect on the flexural properties of wood-PLA composite parts built through FFF

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Abstract

This paper aims to determine the flexural stiffness and strength of a composite made of a polylactic acid reinforced with wood particles, named commercially as Timberfill, manufactured through fused filament fabrication (FFF). The influence of four factors (layer height, nozzle diameter, fill density, and printing velocity) is studied through an L_{27} Taguchi orthogonal array. The response variables used as output results for an analysis of variance are obtained from a set of four-point bending tests. Results show that the layer height is the most influential parameter on flexural strength, followed by nozzle diameter and infill density, whereas the printing velocity has no significant influence. Ultimately, an optimal parameter set that maximizes the material's flexural strength is found by combining a 0.2-mm layer height, 0.7-mm nozzle diameter, 75% fill density, and 35-mm/s velocity. The highest flexural resistance achieved experimentally is 47.26 MPa. The statistical results are supported with microscopic photographs of fracture sections, and validated by comparing them with previous studies performed on non-reinforced PLA material, proving that the introduction of wood fibers in PLA matrix reduces the resistance of raw PLA by hindering the cohesion between filaments and generating voids inside it. Lastly, five solid Timberfill specimens manufactured by injection molding were also tested to compare their strength with the additive manufactured samples. Results prove that treating the wood-PLA through additive manufacturing results in an improvement of its resistance and elastic properties, being the Young's module almost 25% lower than the injected material.

Keywords Additive manufacturing · 3D printing · Fused filament fabrication · Young's module · Flexural strength · Timberfill

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Abbreviations

AM	Additive manufacturing
FFF	Fused filament fabrication
DOE	Design of experiments
ANOVA	Analysis of variance

1 Introduction

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Among all the additive manufacturing (AM) technologies, the most popular is fused deposition modeling (FDM), also referred to as fused filament fabrication (FFF) [1]. This is due to its economic accessibility, ease of use, and variety of materials commercially available [2]. These kinds of technologies offer the potential for significant cost savings due to reduced material waste and the production of intricate geometries. Therefore, they have gained considerable attention during the last decades. An FFF printer generates a 3-dimensional object by extruding a stream of heated and semi-melted thermoplastic material, which is deposited onto layer upon layer, working from the bottom up. This process is performed by means of a heated print head that is oozing out a permanent flow of that semi-molten plastic. The deposited material will almost immediately harden upon leaving the hot print head, thus materializing in a small period of time the desired work-piece [3].

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57 The increase in accessibility of FFF machines has inspired
58 the scientific community to work towards the understanding
59 of the structural performance of components fabricated with
60 this technology. During the last years, numerous researches
61 have focused on studying the influence of the building param-
62 eters on different mechanical properties. The existence of a
63 high variety of parameters that influence the results of additive
64 manufacturing makes it difficult to choose the best combina-
65 tion suitable to optimize the mechanical characteristics of the
66 part for final use. Usually, operators choose these parameters
67 under their experience and acquired knowledge, but there is
68 not enough comprehensive information to determine them
69 from a scientific point of view, or at least confirmed by exper-
70 imental evidence [4]. Afrose et al. [5] developed an experi-
71 mental analysis of fatigue characteristics by considering the
72 effect of different build orientations. It was observed that the
73 ultimate tensile stress of polylactic acid (PLA) samples built in
74 the x direction was the highest at 38.7 MPa and ranged from
75 60 to 64% of the raw PLA material. Gomez-Gras et al. [6]
76 studied the influence of the infill density and pattern, nozzle
77 diameter, layer height, and printing speed on fatigue perfor-
78 mance of cylindrical specimens, and found a lower threshold
79 for the fatigue endurance limit at 35.8 MPa. In that research,
80 the honeycomb infill pattern was also advised to manufacture
81 FFF parts, as it enabled a longer lifespan with regard to spec-
82 imens manufactured using a rectilinear infill. Further studies
83 by Es Said et al. [7] show that the raster orientation defines the
84 alignment direction of the polymer molecules, making the
85 additive manufactured parts highly anisotropic. Wu et al. [8]
86 devoted a study to evaluate the influence of the layer thickness
87 and the raster angle on the mechanical properties of polyether-
88 ether-ketone (PEEK) pieces. Samples with three different lay-
89 er thicknesses (200, 300, and 400 μm) and raster angles (0° ,
90 30° , and 45°) were built, and their tensile, compressive, and
91 bending strengths were tested. The optimal mechanical prop-
92 erties of the samples were found at a layer thickness of
93 300 μm and a raster angle of 0° . Furthermore, a comparison
94 with acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) parts proved that
95 the average tensile strengths of PEEK parts higher than those
96 for ABS, indicating its interest from an industrial point of view
97 in substituting the use of ABS.

98 Authors have also typically applied techniques other than
99 statistical analysis of mechanical tests. For instance, Shabat
100 et al. [9] performed the mechanical and structural characteri-
101 zation of FDM of ABS modeling material by visual testing
102 and light microscopy. The test results revealed different frac-
103 ture surfaces depending to the different building strategies.
104 The fracture modes revealed greater ductility for specimens
105 built horizontally. Similar results were reached by Kumar
106 Sood et al. [10], considering the influence of five important
107 process parameters such as layer thickness, orientation, raster
108 angle, raster width, and air gap on three responses (tensile,
109 flexural, and impact strength) of test specimen.

110 On the other hand, Araya-Calvo et al. [11] conducted me-
111 chanical characterization of AM technology based on com-
112 posite filament fabrication (CFF), which utilizes a similar
113 method of layer by layer printing as FFF through experimental
114 design, to investigate the effect of fiber pattern, reinforcement
115 distribution, and print orientation on compressive and flexural
116 mechanical properties of polyamide 6 (PA6) reinforced with
117 continuous carbon fiber (CF). In this work, maximized flex-
118 ural response is achieved with 0.4893 carbon fiber volume
119 ratio, concentric reinforcement and perpendicular to the ap-
120 plied force, resulting in a flexural modulus of 14.17 GPa and a
121 proportional limit of 231.1 MPa. Another study focused on the
122 influence of nozzle temperature and infill line orientations for
123 parts made with short CF-reinforced PLA. Results have
124 shown the influence of nozzle temperature on the mechanical
125 properties, with an optimum temperature maximizing the ten-
126 sile properties. Infill orientations also play a significant role in
127 achieving good mechanical properties, with the proper com-
128 bination of orientation enabling the tailoring of properties
129 along a specific axis [12].

130 To reduce the consumption of petroleum-based resources
131 and thereby enhance the eco-friendliness of the material, it
132 could be interesting to replace of parts of ABS with other
133 materials such as PLA or other composites and renewable
134 materials for same purposes. To this extent, other researches
135 have compared the mechanical characterizations of different
136 materials [13–15]. Tymrak et al. [16] quantified the basic ten-
137 sile strength/stress and elastic modulus of printed ABS and
138 PLA components using realistic environmental conditions
139 for standard users of a selection of low-cost, open-source 3-
140 D printers. The results show that the average tensile strength
141 of RepRap printed parts is 28.5 MPa for ABS and 56.6 MPa
142 for PLA with average elastic module of 1807 MPa for ABS
143 and 3368 MPa for PLA. These results indicate that the 3-D
144 printed components from RepRaps are comparable in tensile
145 strength and elastic modulus to the parts printed on commer-
146 cial 3-D printing systems. While considerations must be made
147 for the settings, tuning, and operation of each individual print-
148 er as well as the type, age, and quality of polymer filament
149 used, functionally strong parts can be created with open-
150 source 3-D printers within the bounds of their mechanical
151 properties. Ali Bagheri et al. [17] analyzed the mechanical
152 behavior of octet-truss microstructures of scaffold stiffness
153 made of PLA. Through this study, the effect of the struts
154 radius on the structure stiffness was assessed. The results have
155 shown that higher density delivers higher values of the mod-
156 ular elasticity.

157 Also several researchers considered different mechanical
158 behaviors of parts fabricated through another different
159 manufacturing technologies [18–20], and different treatments
160 on the raw materials and building conditions [21–24]. Amin
161 Abedini et al. [25] studied the effects of the percentage of
162 Al_2O_3 nanoparticles in an ABS matrix and injection molding

163 process parameters on the mechanical and thermal properties
 164 of nanocomposites. Tensile and impact tests evidenced that
 165 Al₂O₃ nanoparticles decreased the impact strength of the
 166 nanocomposites. On the other hand, the effects of injection
 167 molding process parameters were statistically insignificant
 168 which imply more flexibility on selecting the injection mold-
 169 ing processing conditions. Another study [26] investigated
 170 deep drawing process of brass-steel laminated sheets from
 171 the required forming load and thickness reductions points of
 172 view. It was observed that the friction coefficient of steel was
 173 the most important parameter influencing thickness reductions
 174 of both sheets with 41 and 39% contributions, respectively. To
 175 achieve higher resistances of mechanical properties, many
 176 contradictions still need to be considered, including the high
 177 costs associated with these commercial machines, their mater-
 178 ial restrictions, and the difficulty to study process parameters
 179 [27].

180 As observed in the presented state of the art, the exploration
 181 of mechanical properties of workpieces generated through ad-
 182 ditive manufacturing has been extensively tackled with.
 183 However, references only focus on the typical PLA and
 184 ABS materials, neglecting the existence of other raw materials
 185 that can be manufactured through FFF. For this reason, the
 186 aim of this work is to characterize an innovative PLA-wood
 187 composite by studying the influence of printing parameters on
 188 the one provided by Filamentum Ltd. under the commercial
 189 name of Timberfill. Results shall be extracted from a four-
 190 point bending tests to determine an optimal set of parameters
 191 to improve flexural strength. Taguchi *L*₂₇ orthogonal array
 192 design is used in the experimental phase to avoid manufactur-
 193 ing a large amount of runs. Then, to evaluate the achieved
 194 characteristics of flexural property of printed Timberfill sam-
 195 ples, a comparison was made between the mechanical proper-
 196 ties of printed PLA and injected Timberfill parts using the
 197 same test procedure.

198 **2 Materials and methods**

199 **2.1 Four-point bending testing and specimens**

200 The specimens are manufactured with 2.85 mm of diameter
 201 Timberfill Champagne, developed and manufactured by
 202 Filamentum Ltd. To achieve that objective, the company de-
 203 veloped a composition of biodegradable PLA polymer com-
 204 bined with wood fibers in a 10% ratio. This material is pro-
 205 vided as a commodity, with the purposes of becoming a com-
 206 monly used material in FFF machines for various applications,
 207 hence the interest of characterizing and understanding its per-
 208 formance when treated through a FFF process. Table 1 in-
 209 cludes the technical information provided by the
 210 manufacturer.

Table 1 Initial mechanical properties and manufacturer t1.1
 recommendations of printing parameters of Timberfill material

Property	Value	Property	Value	t1.2
Material density	1.26 g/cm ³	Nozzle temperature	170–185 °C	t1.3
Tensile strength ^a	39 MPa	Nozzle diameter	Min. 0.4 mm	t1.4
Tensile modulus ^a	3200 MPa	Extruder velocity	20–30 mm/s	t1.5

^a Minimum guaranteed by the manufacturer

211 The four-point flexural test was performed on prismatic
 212 specimens with dimensions according to the ASTM D6272
 213 standard [28]. This testing method details the procedure to
 214 determine the flexural properties of unreinforced and rein-
 215 forced plastics, including high-modulus composites and elec-
 216 trical insulating materials in different forms. Hence its adequa-
 217 cy for the purposes of these works with a composite material.

218 The test consists on a bar of rectangular cross-section rest-
 219 ing on two supports, which is loaded at two points by means
 220 of the respective loading noses, each one with an equal dis-
 221 tance from the adjacent support point. The distance between
 222 the noses (the load span) is either one third or one half of the
 223 support span. A support span-to-depth ratio of 16:1 shall be
 224 used. The loading noses and supports shall have cylindrical
 225 surfaces. In order to avoid excessive indentation or failure due
 226 to stress concentration directly under the loading noses, the
 227 radii of the loading noses and supports should be 5 ± 0.1 mm.
 228 According to this method, the distances between support
 229 spans and load spans shall be 64 and 21.3 mm, respectively.

230 The machine is adjusted as near as possible to that calcu-
 231 lated rate for the load span of one third of the support span.
 232 Once the conditions are determined, displacement rate of
 233 19 mm/min and maximum displacement of 10.98 mm are
 234 achieved.

235 **2.2 Taguchi experimental design**

236 The Design of Experiments (DOE) technique has been used to
 237 carry out the study. In this work, four parameters varying in
 238 three levels are included in the model. Table 2 shows the
 239 factors and their selected levels to be developed based on a
 240 Taguchi experimental design method which is a robust opti-
 241 mization technique to make experimental to predict responses

Table 2 Factors and levels used for the DOE t2.1

Parameter	Levels			t2.2
	1	2	3	
Layer height (mm)	0.2	0.3	0.4	t2.4
Nozzle diameter (mm)	0.5	0.6	0.7	t2.5
Infill density (%)	25	50	75	t2.6
Printing velocity (mm/s)	25	30	35	t2.7

242 and optimize the FFF process conditions in accuracy level
 243 [29]. These factors and levels were selected based on a pre-
 244 liminary set of tests out of the experimental design of this
 245 paper, to confirm and adjust the recommendations given by
 246 the material manufacturer. Since the layer height should be
 247 almost half of the nozzle diameter, the selected layer height
 248 values are based on the nozzle diameter.

249 To analyze the influence of these factors, a L_{27} Taguchi
 250 orthogonal array was used to conduct the experimental phase
 251 (Table 3). Of each manufacturing parameter set or run includ-
 252 ed in the array, 5 specimens were manufactured and tested, to
 253 guarantee the repeatability of the results. Once the results were
 254 obtained, the statistical calculations were performed by the
 255 Minitab 18 software, and the interactions between the differ-
 256 ent parameters were analyzed which leads to the conclusion if
 257 there is significant interaction among the pairs of selected
 258 values or not, since the p values of each pairs should be less
 259 than 0.05.

260 It should be taken into account that all of the samples are
 261 printed with honeycomb infill pattern. Therefore, the rest of
 262 the parameters that are not object of study have been kept

constant among all specimens (orientation 0-X, raster angle 263
 45°, nozzle temperature 180 °C, infill pattern honeycomb, and 264
 2 skirt layers). 265

266 **2.3 Specimens manufacture**

267 According to the ASTM testing method, the specimens may
 268 be cut from sheets, plates, or molded shapes, or may be
 269 molded to the desired finished dimensions. Their actual di-
 270 mensions and shape are a parallelepiped with $10 \times 8 \times 4$ mm.

271 **2.4 Experimental setup**

272 The four-point bending experiments were conducted using a
 273 ZwickRoell Z020, electromechanical multi-space machine
 274 with a maximum load of 20 kN. A 500-N load cell was con-
 275 nected to a Spider 8 data acquisition system to record the force
 276 applied every sampling instant during the test and transfer the
 277 data to the computer. On the other hand, the specimen was
 278 recorded through an HD camera at 60-Hz sampling frequency.
 279 The camera was also equipped with a switch-controlled flash

t3.1 **Table 3** L_{27} Taguchi orthogonal
 t3.2 array of DOE

Run	Layer height (mm)	Nozzle diameter (mm)	Infill density (%)	Printing velocity (mm/s)
1	0.2	0.5	25	25
2	0.2	0.5	50	30
3	0.2	0.5	75	35
4	0.2	0.6	25	35
5	0.2	0.6	50	30
6	0.2	0.6	75	25
7	0.2	0.7	25	35
8	0.2	0.7	50	25
9	0.2	0.7	75	30
10	0.3	0.5	25	30
11	0.3	0.5	50	35
12	0.3	0.5	75	25
13	0.3	0.6	25	35
14	0.3	0.6	50	25
15	0.3	0.6	75	30
16	0.3	0.7	25	25
17	0.3	0.7	50	30
18	0.3	0.7	75	35
19	0.4	0.5	25	35
20	0.4	0.5	50	25
21	0.4	0.5	75	30
22	0.4	0.6	25	25
23	0.4	0.6	50	30
24	0.4	0.6	75	35
25	0.4	0.7	25	30
26	0.4	0.7	50	35
27	0.4	0.7	75	25

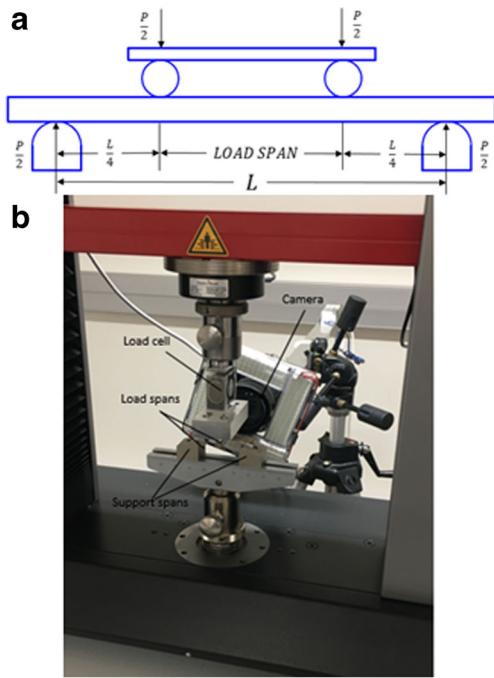


Fig. 1 a. Geometry and loading system of the four-point bending test. b Universal testing machine ZwickRoell Z020 used to conduct the tests with camera and load equipment assembly

to illuminate the test area and to synchronize the data. Like that, strain was computed as a result of a Matlab routine based on image processing functions through which the frames were translated into displacement. Figure 1 shows the standard loading system and test equipment assembly.

2.5 Analyzing process

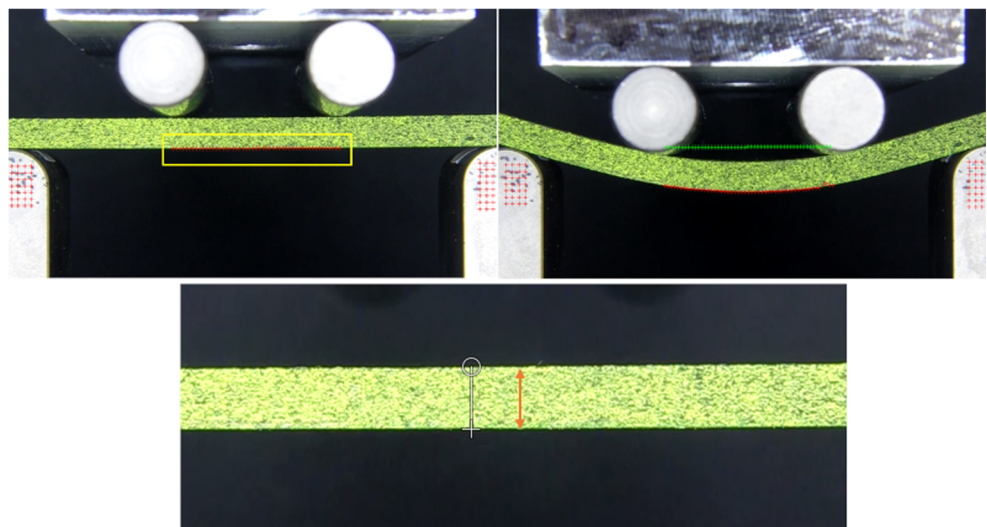
The described equipment was applied to carry out the tests on all of the 135 FFF samples. Furthermore, five additional specimens were manufactured with the same raw material through

injection, to compare the results of additive manufactured parts with a reference value. After each test was completed, two different files were generated. Firstly, a file that contains the force collected from the load cell, as well as the recorded voltage versus time. Secondly, the video recorded by the camera that provided graphical information to compute the strain of the specimen at every stage of the test.

The constructed stress-strain figure for every specimen was used to extract different mechanical descriptors used as response variables for the ANOVA model. These were the Young's modulus (E), the elastic limit ($S_{0.2}$), the maximum stress or flexural strength (σ_{max}), and maximum deformation (e_{max}). A self-designed Matlab routine was executed in a Matlab R2018b software. Essentially, the routine performs the following steps:

- The input data is the HD video processed during the test, and it is firstly divided into its different frames. Since the camera captures 60 frames per second, and the average duration of the test is 50 s, the average number of frames to process for each test is 3000.
- The video frames and the recorded force data are synchronize. When the test starts, the flash is activated and sends a 0-V signal to the DAQ Spider system to launch data recording. Subsequently, the Matlab script synchronizes the dark frame of the video and the Spider data recorded alongside at the same time. Then, it detects the points until the maximum bending position before the sample will be broken.
- A grid is generated in the initial frame of the test sample. This gridding consists of a straight line divided by 50 points at the outer fiber and two rectangular grids at the support spans (Fig. 2a). It is important that the linear grid extends the space between both loading points.
- Deflection is computed by tracking every marked pixels, based on the differences between the initial and final

Fig. 2 a Generated grid with Matlab ® script. b Image processing protocol. c Calculation of the pixel/millimeter ratio



t4.1 **Table 4** Results obtained for each experimental run including standard deviations

t4.2		<i>E</i> (GPa)	<i>S</i> _{0,2} (MPa)	δ_{max} (MPa)	<i>e</i> _{max} (%)
t4.3	1	2.07 ± 0.08	30.66 ± 0.56	35.34 ± 0.34	2.77 ± 0.34
t4.4	2	2.13 ± 0.04	33.48 ± 0.77	39.52 ± 1.25	3.49 ± 0.33
t4.5	3	2.17 ± 0.04	34.19 ± 0.42	41.15 ± 0.88	4.65 ± 1.78
t4.6	4	2.03 ± 0.08	31.56 ± 0.91	37.82 ± 0.49	3.46 ± 0.08
t4.7	5	2.12 ± 0.04	31.83 ± 0.97	39.76 ± 0.93	4.35 ± 0.00
t4.8	6	2.16 ± 0.05	32.96 ± 0.47	40.45 ± 0.64	3.92 ± 0.45
t4.9	7	2.29 ± 0.15	36.28 ± 0.56	44.17 ± 1.82	4.07 ± 0.68
t4.10	8	2.24 ± 0.08	35.73 ± 0.56	45.40 ± 0.99	5.34 ± 1.62
t4.11	9	2.41 ± 0.04	38.06 ± 1.71	47.26 ± 0.86	4.24 ± 0.31
t4.12	10	1.76 ± 0.07	28.45 ± 1.05	34.29 ± 0.68	3.80 ± 0.32
t4.13	11	1.89 ± 0.05	29.54 ± 0.81	36.26 ± 0.58	4.70 ± 1.68
t4.14	12	1.77 ± 0.06	29.56 ± 0.71	36.24 ± 0.64	4.72 ± 1.99
t4.15	13	1.82 ± 0.07	36.58 ± 1.62	34.94 ± 1.37	3.80 ± 0.73
t4.16	14	1.87 ± 0.08	29.69 ± 0.52	37.46 ± 0.66	4.07 ± 0.14
t4.17	15	1.82 ± 0.06	28.97 ± 1.05	35.51 ± 2.40	3.96 ± 0.61
t4.18	16	1.84 ± 0.07	29.27 ± 1.24	36.64 ± 1.29	4.48 ± 0.44
t4.19	17	1.91 ± 0.08	29.49 ± 1.07	37.01 ± 1.83	3.86 ± 0.44
t4.20	18	1.94 ± 0.08	30.40 ± 1.62	40.17 ± 1.67	4.89 ± 0.37
t4.21	19	1.70 ± 0.09	26.60 ± 1.78	26.04 ± 2.03	3.15 ± 1.76
t4.22	20	1.81 ± 0.08	27.53 ± 0.31	33.19 ± 0.70	3.62 ± 0.31
t4.23	21	1.73 ± 0.11	27.74 ± 0.64	35.14 ± 1.43	4.57 ± 0.62
t4.24	22	1.41 ± 0.08	23.32 ± 1.78	27.05 ± 2.25	3.59 ± 0.76
t4.25	23	1.69 ± 0.11	27.23 ± 0.94	32.97 ± 2.14	4.04 ± 0.50
t4.26	24	1.89 ± 0.20	29.43 ± 5.46	35.64 ± 7.74	3.88 ± 0.90
t4.27	25	1.86 ± 0.03	30.71 ± 0.53	37.99 ± 0.81	4.64 ± 0.24
t4.28	26	1.91 ± 0.09	31.35 ± 1.21	39.79 ± 1.52	4.79 ± 0.26
t4.29	27	1.95 ± 0.15	31.09 ± 1.61	40.27 ± 1.23	4.80 ± 0.53

files were generated and introduced into a specific script to compute the real deformation of the specimens' outer fibers. All deformations for every frame is calculated as described in the previous point, and the whole flexural curve is created. The pixels that have been measured by Matlab are converted in millimeters. The GIMP 2.10.8 software is used to do this, as can be seen in Fig. 2 c. By means of another Matlab script, the voltage and the deformation are calculated for the specimen second by second, and the results are synchronized with the deformations value that have been calculated previously. Finally a .txt format file is generated with voltage, deformation versus time. Consequently, the stress is calculated by the Euler-Bernoulli equation for a rectangular section beam subjected to pure bending stress (Eq. 1)

$$S = \frac{PL}{bd^2} \tag{1}$$

where *S* is the stress applied to the external fiber, *P* is the load, *L* is the specimen length, *b* is the specimen width, and *d* is the specimen thickness.

Here the average value of thickness and width is defined by measuring manually the specimen before the test with a micrometer.

position. The results are converted into an array at the X-axis and Y-axis separately. The difference between the positions in the current frame (in red) and the starting position (in green) is shown in Fig. 2 b. By finishing this step, two scroll

2.6 Comparison between Timberfill and PLA

Since Timberfill is a composite of PLA and wood fibers, it is interesting to compare the results achieved on Timberfill material with its base material, as it is an extended material and is

Fig. 3 Main effect for means calculated through ANOVA. Response variable: Young's module

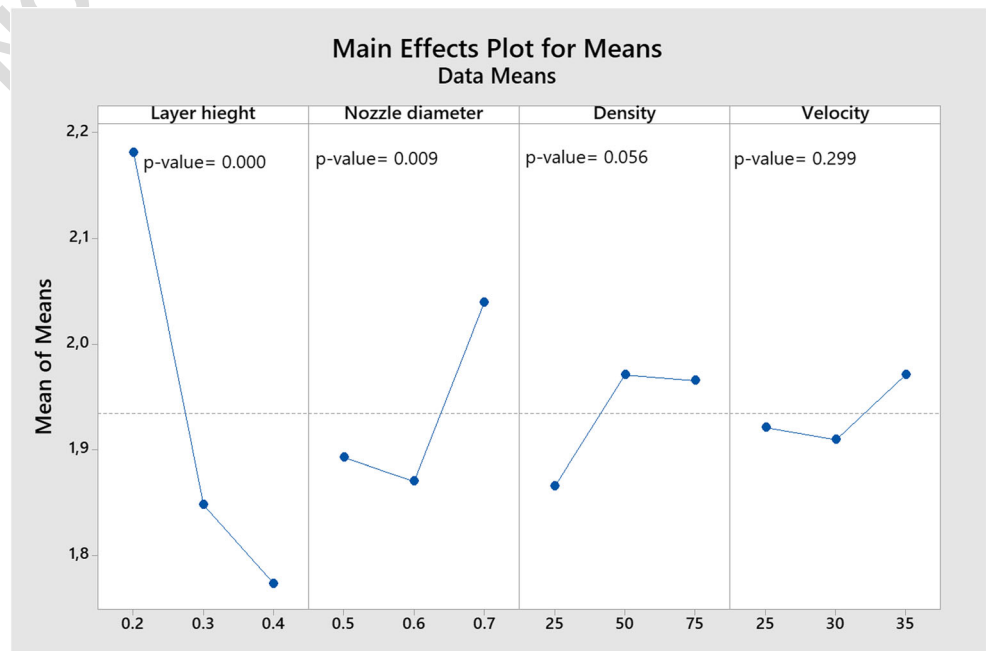
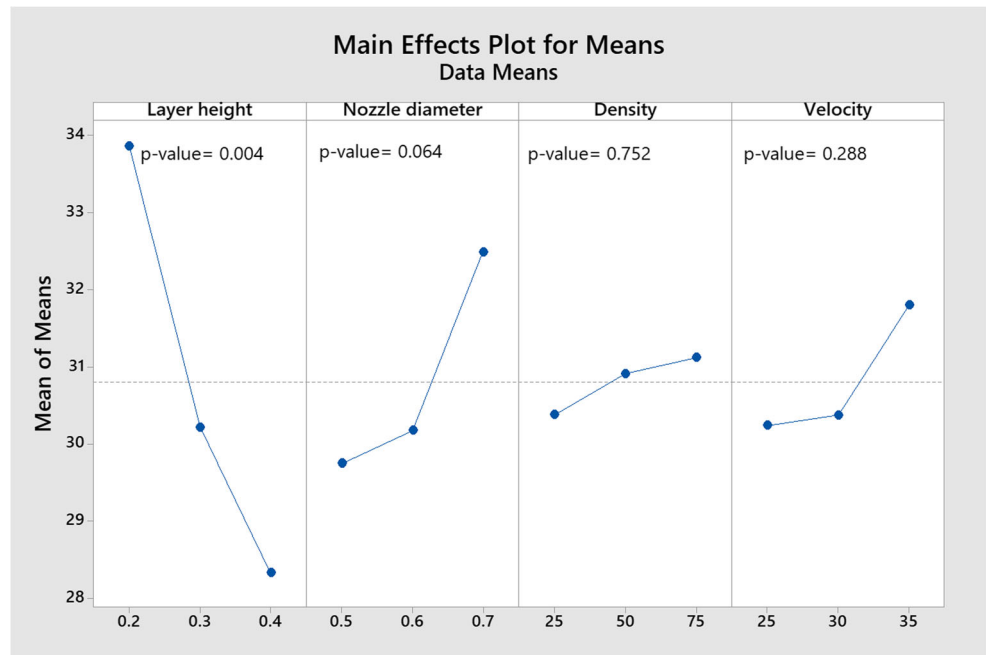


Fig. 4 Main effect for mean effects calculated through ANOVA. Response variable: elastic limit



355 often cited in the bibliography. The used data to carry out the
 356 comparison are obtained from [30] which has been done in the
 357 same condition of current work in this research group. Both
 358 materials were characterized through a tensile stress, and their
 359 stress-strain curves are compared. Factographies taken with a
 360 Moticam 3 digital camera through a Motic SMC binocular
 361 loupe shall also lead to further detail about the differences
 362 between fracture modes. Finally, microscratch tests were con-
 363 ducted in a Scratch tester unit (CSM-Instruments) using a
 364 spherical diamond indenter with a radius of 200 μm, to

compare wear resistance of both materials. Tests were done
 under linearly increasing load, from 0 to 120 N in case of
 Timberfill and from 0 to 70 N in case of PLA, at a loading
 rate of 10 mm/min and in an interval length of 5 mm, accord-
 ing to ASTM C1624-05 standard [25]. These tests were con-
 ducted along both the longitudinal and transversal printing
 direction to observe the main plastic deformation mechanisms
 induced. Surface damage induced during scratch tests was
 observed by a desktop scanning electron microscopy
 Phenom XL from ThermoFisher Scientific.

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Fig. 5 Main effect for mean effects calculated through ANOVA. Response variable: maximum strength

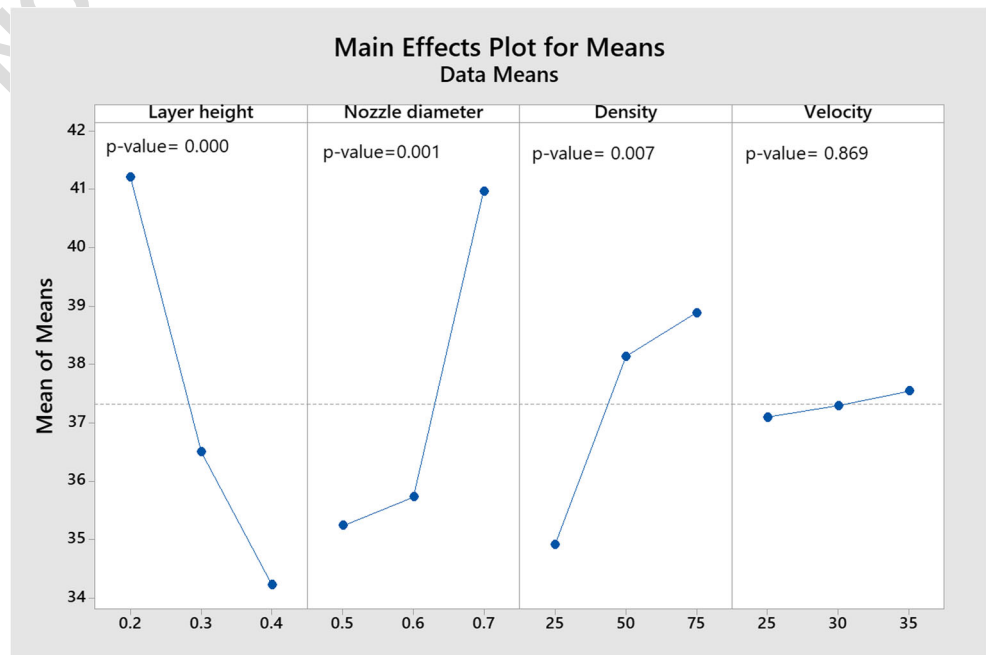


Fig. 6 Main effect for mean effects calculated through ANOVA. Response variable: maximum deformation

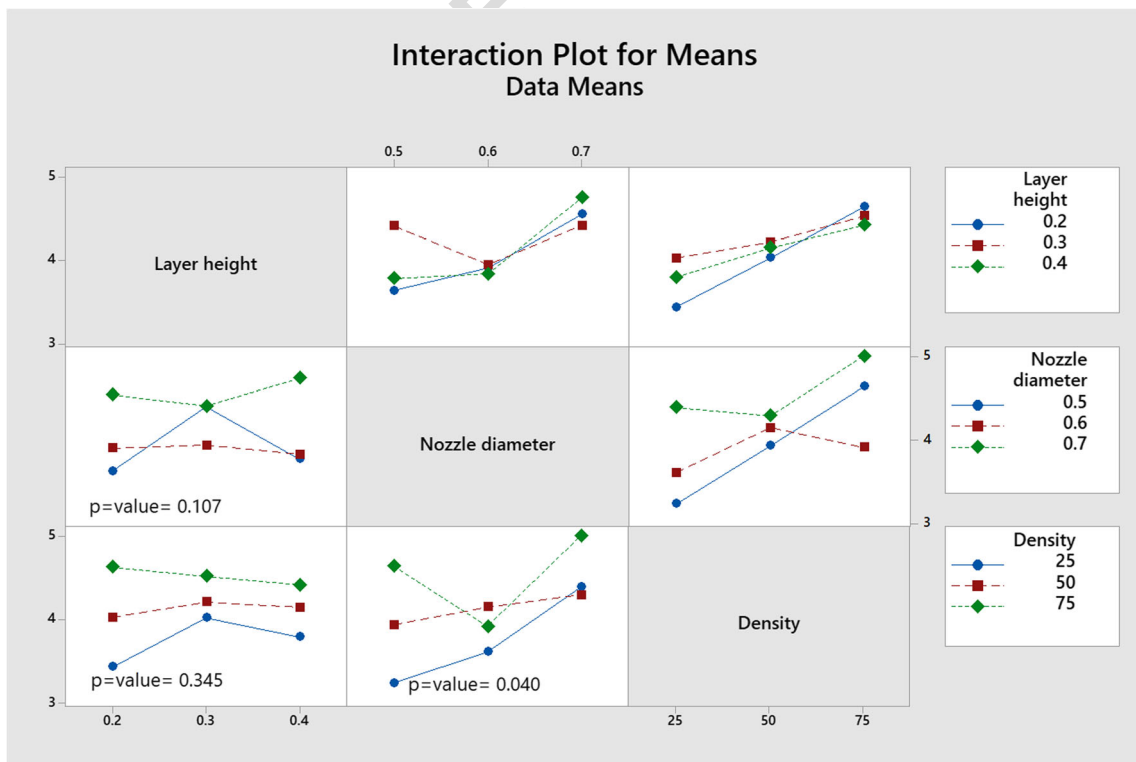


Fig. 7 Main effect for interactions calculated through ANOVA. Response variable: maximum deformation

t5.1 **Table 5** Summary of
t5.2 significances on responses. ↑↑,
t5.3 highly influential parameters. ↑,
t5.4 slightly influential parameters.
n.i., non-influential parameters

Factors	Responses			
	Elastic properties		Plastic properties	
	Young's module (E)	Elastic limit ($R_{p0.2}$)	Maximum stress (σ_{max})	Maximum deformation (ϵ)
Layer height (mm)	0.2 ↑↑	0.2 ↑↑	0.2 ↑↑	n.i.
Nozzle diameter (mm)	0.7 ↑↑	0.7↑	0.7 ↑↑	0.7 ↑↑
Fill density (%)	50 ↑	n.i.	75 ↑↑	75 ↑↑
Printing velocity (mm/s)	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.

375 **2.7 Comparison between FFF Timberfill**
376 **and injection-molded Timberfill**

377 Finally, a comparison between the flexural properties of the
378 printed and injected Timberfill was conducted, to evaluate the
379 effects of the additive manufacturing strategy on the material's
380 properties.

381 **3 Results analysis**

382 The average results of the five repetitions of each manufactur-
383 ing configuration, including the standard deviation, are in-
384 cluded in Table 4.

385 **3.1 Analysis of variance**

386 An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the
387 dataset included in the Taguchi experimental array, for each
388 parameter that describes the mechanical behavior of the eval-
389 uated specimens. To validate the statistical significance of the
390 parameters included in the model on each of the responses, the
391 p value associated to the ANOVA was compared to a signifi-
392 cance level of 5%.

393 **3.1.1 Young's module**

394 In this case, it can be concluded that the most significant
395 parameters, due to their p values, are the layer height and the

t6.1 **Table 6** Optimized set
t6.2 of parameters and their
t6.3 levels

Factor	Level
Layer height (mm)	0.2
Nozzle diameter (mm)	0.7
Density (%)	75
Printing velocity (mm/s)	35

nozzle diameter as shown in Fig. 3. This graph evidences that
the layer height results have an inverse relation with the
Young's module, but higher values of nozzle diameter and
density results in a higher elastic module. Based on the ob-
tained p values, density can be taken into account because the
value is not so much bigger than 0.05, but printing velocity
does not show a significant effect on the Young's module.
Increasing the Young's module by lower height of the layers
and bigger diameter of nozzle can be due to the increasing
connectivity between the layers by one side, and decreasing
the porosity on the other side.

In this case, obtained p values were more than 0.05; it
means that the selected parameters in this study are indepen-
dent of each other, at least in the analyzed value ranges for
Young's module.

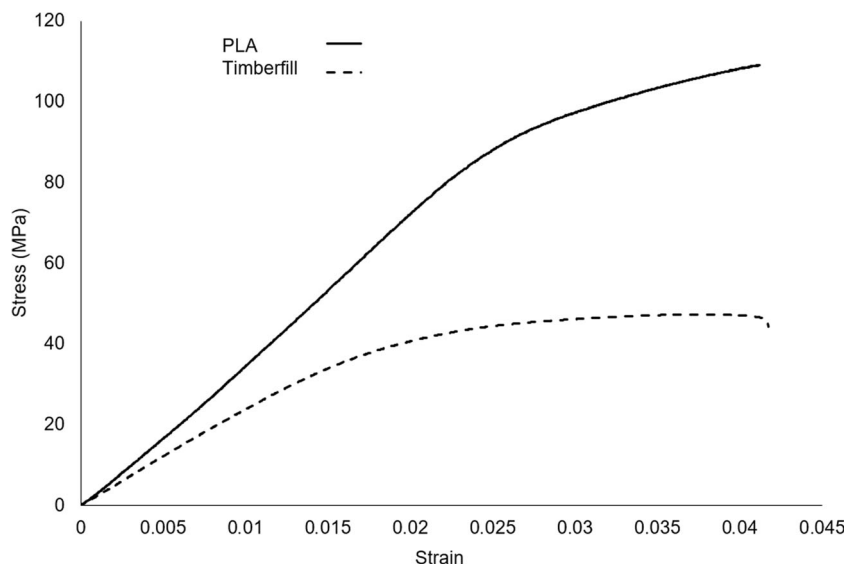
396 **3.1.2 Elastic limit**

It is necessary to see how the variation of the different factors
affects the elastic limit, which is indicated in the graph of main
effects for the averages (Fig. 4). As already mentioned, the
most significant parameter due to the p value on elastic limit is
layer height; that it should be lower to obtain the bigger elastic
limit, which in this work is 0.2 mm. On the other side, the
nozzle diameter has a direct proportion with the elastic limit; it
means the bigger the diameter, the higher elastic limit. This

t7.1 **Table 7** Comparison of factor levels leading to best results for PLA and
t7.2 wood-reinforced PLA

Factor	Material	
	PLA	Timberfill
Layer height (mm)	0.1	0.2
Nozzle diameter (mm)	0.6	0.7
Density (%)	75	75
Printing velocity (mm/s)	20	35

Fig. 8 Strain-stress curve of PLA and wood-reinforced PLA



420 fact has the same reason to which happened to Young’s mod- 451
 421 ule response regarding that both are related to elastic regime. 452
 422 Infill density and printing velocity did not show a significant 453
 423 effect on elastic limit. 454

424 Similar to the interaction between parameters on Young’s 455
 425 module, the *p* value does not show significant on limit elastic. 456
 426 It means there is no influential interaction between 457
 427 parameters. 458

428 **3.1.3 Maximum stress**

429 Based on the obtained *p* values from the factors, it can be 459
 430 mentioned that there is a notable significance of layer height, 460
 431 nozzle diameter, and infill density on the maximum stress. 461
 432 Following, the best levels of these factors are shown in Fig. 5. 462

433 In order to the selected variations of the factors in this work, 463
 434 the best level of the layer height, nozzle diameter, and infill 464
 435 density be influent on the maximum stress are 0.2 mm, 465
 436 0.7 mm, and 75%, respectively. Decreasing the layer height 466
 437 and increasing the nozzle diameter and fill density rises the 467
 438 solidity of the sample to endure the tension more often. 468

439 The obtained *p* values of interaction are higher than 0.05, 469
 440 therefore the interaction between parameters should not be 470
 441 taken into account as a significant. 471

442 **3.1.4 Maximum deformation**

443 In this case, the layer height is not an influential parameter 472
 444 whereas infill density and nozzle diameter have shown signif- 473
 445 icant *p* value on the maximum deformation. In Fig. 6, the best 474
 446 level of these factors could be found. 475

447 In order to the selected variations of the factors in this work, 476
 448 the best level of the infill density and nozzle diameter to in- 477
 449 fluence on the maximum deformation are 75% and 0.7 mm, 478
 450 respectively. It is clear that bigger nozzle diameter meant more 479

voluminous filaments cause more deformation resistance to 451
 failure consequently. It can be seen from Fig. 7 that there could 452
 be different infarctions between the parameters and levels. As 453
 already mentioned, to consider the interaction of parameters 454
 influential, the *p* value has to be taken into account. In this 455
 case is lower than 0.05 for the interaction between nozzle 456
 diameter and density, meaning that the interaction between 457
 the levels of both parameters can influence the maximum 458
 deformation value. 459

460 It is worth mentioning that the signal-to-noise ratio (SN) 460
 has been measured to find the robustness of each factor on the 461
 selected response variables. Since the most influential param- 462
 eters were also the most robust ones for each taken response 463
 variable and the form of the graphs was totally the same to the 464
 graph of the means, it was decided to avoid put all of the 465
 graphs. 466

467 **3.2 Results discussion**

468 An overview of the results is summarized in Table 5. Based on 468
 the *p* values, the most influential parameters on the responses 469
 are shown with two arrows, whereas those factors that are only 470
 slightly influential are associated to one arrow. The best levels 471
 for each one are indicated in the cells. Non-influential param- 472
 eters are also indicated in the table. 473

Table 8 Comparison of maximum values of all mechanical properties 481
 achieved for PLA and wood-reinforced PLA

Material	Timberfill	PLA	
Young’s modulus (GPa)	2.41	3.70	t8.3
Elastic limit (MPa)	38.06	90.80	t8.4
Maximum stress (MPa)	47.26	109.50	t8.5
Maximum deformation (%)	5.34	6.21	t8.6

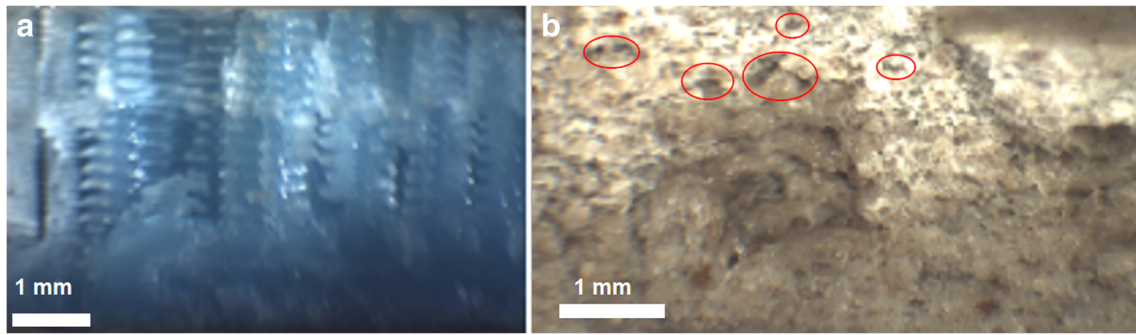


Fig. 9 Fracture section of specimens. **a** PLA specimen with a layer height of 0.1 mm and filament width 0.3 mm. **b** Wood-reinforced PLA specimen with layer height 0.2 mm and filament width 0.7 mm. Both in 75% infill density

474 These results evidenced that each of the analyzed param- 494
 475 eters is related to a different stress-strain functional regime of 495
 476 the FFF Timberfill material. Whereas the layer height seems to 496
 477 determine how the material endures the stress to which it is 497
 478 subjected during the whole test, the nozzle diameter and the 498
 479 fill percentage are clearly more influential in how the 499
 480 Timberfill works in its plastic regime, as well as its failure 500
 481 mode as proves the maximum deformation registered in the 501
 482 tests. For this reason, a single optimal parameter set cannot be 502
 483 defined. Since the height of the layers should not exceed half 503
 484 of the nozzle diameter, the lower height of layers resulted as 504
 485 the bigger nozzle diameter. These phenomena could be be- 505
 486 cause of the enough adhesion between the layers and make 506
 487 the samples more stiff consequently. Increasing the solidity 507
 488 percentage of inside the samples based on the infill density 508
 489 results to more endurance and the samples resist more to fail- 509
 490 ure as well. 510

491 In this situation, the criteria that will be followed in order to 511
 492 define the best level for each parameter are based on the fol- 512
 493 lowing two conditions: 513

- If a parameter delivers the best response at the same level 494
 in all cases, it is chosen. 495
- In case of divergence, then the level with the lowest *p* 496
 value in the ANOVA test is chosen. 497

Table 6 shows the final result for the optimized set of param- 498
 eters. It is worth mentioning that, as the printing velocity is 499
 not influential in any case, the highest value has been taken for 500
 the sake of productivity. 501

3.3 Comparison between Timberfill and PLA 502

Table 7 shows the best combination set of parameters obtained 503
 for PLA and Timberfill material. The results related to PLA 504
 specimens have been extracted from previous research pub- 505
 lished by the authors in [30]. 506

The direct comparison of both materials proves that they 507
 demand a low value of layer height combined with a higher 508
 nozzle diameter, and a 75% infill density, so that their mechan- 509
 ical properties are enhanced. Indeed, by decreasing the height 510

Fig. 10 Microscratch tests. **a** Wood-reinforced PLA. **b** PLA

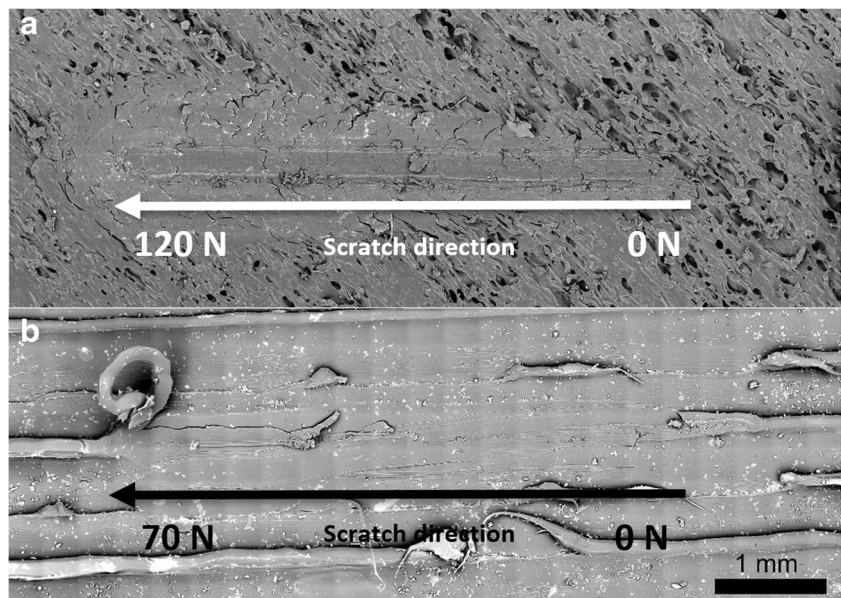
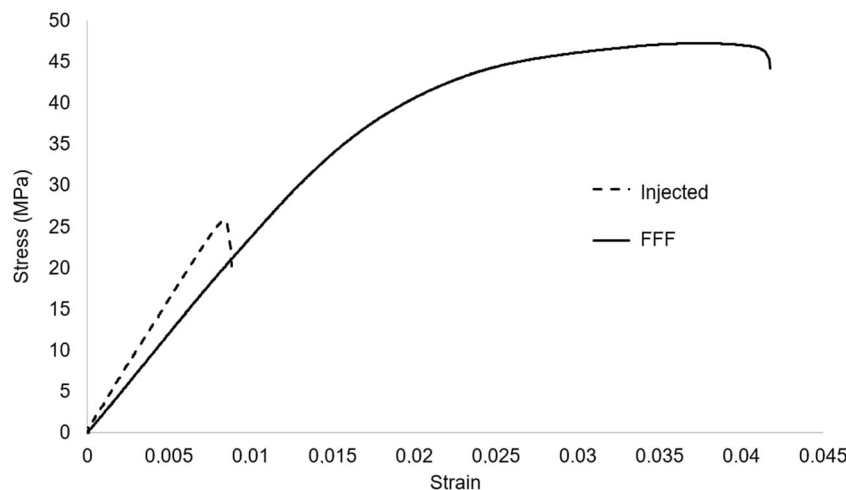


Fig. 11 Strain-stress curve of FFF and injected wood-reinforced PLA



511 between layers and increasing the material flow, as well as
 512 depositing each filament with the lowest offset to the adjacent
 513 one, leads to a net increase of the enduring material, thus
 514 enhancing the overall resistance of the material. On the other
 515 hand, printing velocity results are reversed, although it must
 516 be highlighted that 20 mm/min resulted in better results for the
 517 PLA, and was non-influential in the Timberfill material. The
 518 presence of wood could be the cause to this divergence.

519 Although the direct comparison of the optimal levels has
 520 proved a similar influence of both materials, it is also necessary
 521 to compare the absolute results represented by two respective
 522 illustrative strain-stress curves (Fig. 8). The absolute values
 523 are shown in Table 8. The introduction of wood in the
 524 PLA matrix is clearly detrimental to the mechanical behavior
 525 of the Timberfill.

526 The examination of a fractography can lead to further in-
 527 formation about this phenomenon. Indeed, the wood fibers
 528 create discontinuities in the matrix causing lower ductility in
 529 Timberfill with respect to PLA. That is also corroborated by
 530 the microscopy pictures of fracture cross-section taken by the
 531 same camera (Fig. 9). Some examples of segregated wood
 532 particles looking like porosity defects are highlighted in Fig.
 533 9b.

534 As a first approach, the presence of wood inside the PLA
 535 matrix could lead to think that it increases the inner friction
 536 of the material, thus increasing its resistance and restricting its
 537 deformation. However, the wood fibers are actually acting as
 538 an anchor that transfers the load to the PLA matrix and its
 539 fibers. Therefore, the crack is forced to advance through these
 540 particles, which are perpendicular to the stress, with a consequent
 541 stress concentration, and an overall decrease of the mechanical
 542 resistance to bend the Timberfill material.

543 To better understand the fracture behavior, micro scratch
 544 tests were performed on both materials (Fig. 10). It is confirmed
 545 that Timberfill is formed as a porous material, as discussed above.
 546 The base PLA deformed by the scratch partially covers the remaining
 547 pores of the sample. Up to the

548 tested force in both materials (120 N for Timberfill, 70 N for
 549 PLA), they both show a ductile behavior, without evidencing
 550 cracking in the base material. Neither of them shows remarkable
 551 adhesive wear. On the other hand, there are no disclosures
 552 between filaments in any of the materials, fact that implies that
 553 the adhesion between filaments in the same layer is enough to
 554 resist the efforts applied during the test.

555 What is clearly different between the two materials is the
 556 obtained friction coefficient, being 0.4 for Timberfill, twice
 557 than for the PLA. In both cases, the value is kept constant
 558 throughout the test. At sight of the obtained results in the
 559 scratch tests, it can be stated that the introduction of the wood
 560 inside the PLA matrix to create the Timberfill composite increases
 561 the friction of the material, that could be interesting for
 562 certain future applications of the material.

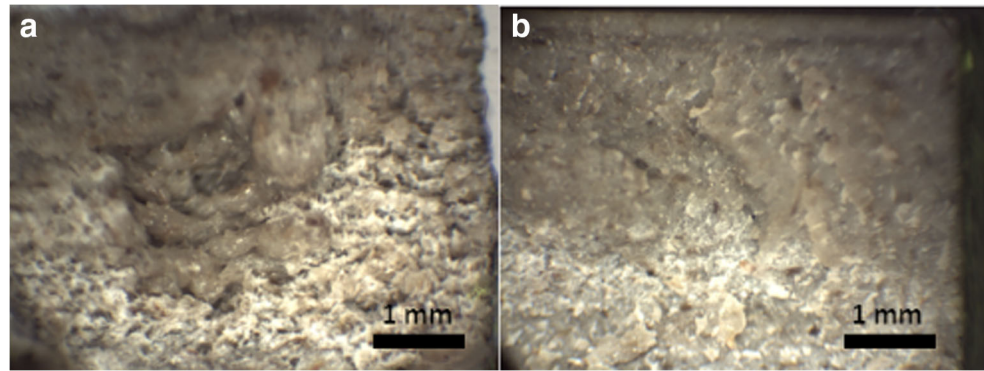
3.4 Comparison between FFF Timberfill and injected Timberfill 563 564

565 Bending engineering stress-strain curves for printed and
 566 injected samples are shown in Fig. 11. The Young's module
 567 of the additive manufactured samples was 2.41 GPa, almost
 568 75% of the injected samples (3.11 GPa), but the other properties
 569 were higher in the FFF specimens than on the completely
 570 solid ones. For example, the average values of flexural

Table 9 Comparison of maximum values of all mechanical properties achieved for injected and FFF wood-reinforced PLA t9.1

Maximum values			
	Printed	Injected	
Young's modulus (GPa)	2.41	3.11	t9.4
Elastic limit (MPa)	38.06	24.62	t9.5
Maximum stress (MPa)	47.26	25.62	t9.6
Maximum deformation (%)	5.34	1.02	t9.7

Fig. 12 Fracture zone of wood-reinforced PLA parts. **a** FFF. **b** Injected



571 strength were 38.06 and 24.62 MPa for printed and injected
 572 samples, respectively (Table 9), meaning that the processing
 573 of the Timberfill material by FFF enhances the overall behav-
 574 ior of the material.

575 To specify this observation, microscopic examinations of
 576 the specimens' cross-section were performed. Figure 12 a
 577 shows the specimen with honeycomb pattern at a 75% infill
 578 density, and Fig. 12 b shows the injected sample. The bright-
 579 ened zones represent the area subjected to tensile effect.
 580 Regarding to the obtained values for responses (Table 9) and
 581 the behavior shown in the fracture, it is noticeable that the
 582 specimen generated by successive filaments shows a higher
 583 ductility due to the fact that these filaments have higher
 584 mobility one with respect to the other. Thus, the crack growth
 585 property which occurs in the outer fiber of the sample can
 586 decrease the ductility of injected parts, because this phenom-
 587 enon should repeat for each layer of printed parts. Likewise,
 588 lower height of the layers and bigger diameter of the nozzle
 589 help adhesion between consecutive layers. This can conse-
 590 quently increase the maximum stress and flexural resistance
 591 of the printed samples.

592 Finally, the printed specimens demonstrated more resis-
 593 tance than injected samples when they are submitted to bend-
 594 ing forces. This means that the FFF process must be recom-
 595 mended over the classical injection method to manufacture
 596 wood-composite PLA pieces, which are expected to be loaded
 597 according to bending moments.

598 **4 Conclusions**

599 The experiments conducted through the research explained in
 600 this paper have enriched the knowledge about an innovative
 601 wood-reinforced PLA material used for additive manufactur-
 602 ing systems. Firstly, it was found that by combining a 0.2-mm
 603 layer height, 0.7-mm nozzle diameter, and 75% infill density,
 604 the material exhibits the best mechanical properties, regardless
 605 of the printing velocity set to the system. Of all those param-
 606 eters, the layer height proves to be the most influential one,
 607 followed by the nozzle diameter, whereas no interaction

608 between them seems to be important to determine the mechan-
 609 ical behavior of the obtained specimens. This result evidences
 610 that a lower height of the layers combined with a higher nozzle
 611 diameter delivers a stronger adhesion between the layers that
 612 enhances the resistance of the additive manufactured parts.

613 On the other hand, valuable information about the compos-
 614 ite material has been found when comparing it to non-
 615 reinforced PLA, as wood particles have proved to hinder the
 616 mechanical resistance of the material due to the fact that they
 617 increase the void between filaments and prevent neck growth
 618 between them. For this reason, the introduction of wood as a
 619 mechanical enhancer should be unadvised, and the wood-
 620 reinforced PLA should only be used in applications where me-
 621 chanical properties are not relevant. An unexplored aspect of
 622 the matter in this paper is whether changing the actual com-
 623 position of wood fiber inside the PLA matrix could be effec-
 624 tive in turn positively effective on the resistance properties of
 625 the composite material.

626 Finally, the comparison of FFF specimens to injected ones has
 627 also proved that the mechanical properties of wood-reinforced
 628 PLA or Timberfill material should be processed through additive
 629 manufacturing to maximize its properties. The maximum deform-
 630 ation experienced by FFF specimens was fivefold than those
 631 obtained through injection, that could be caused by the interac-
 632 tion between filaments and solidity percentage of the workpieces
 633 that increase the ductility of the workpiece.

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 635 gramme of the Generalitat de Catalunya for the financial support.

636 **Data availability** The raw/processed data required to reproduce these
 637 findings cannot be shared at this time as the data also forms part of an
 638 ongoing study.
 639
 640

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