

APPLICATION OF POLYPROPYLENE NANOSILICA AS ADDITIVES IN
WATER BASED MUD TO IMPROVE RHEOLOGICAL PROPERTIES AND
SHALE STABILITY

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work of mine to my family especially my parents for always being there for me, supporting me and caring for me from the moment I opened my eyes until now. I also would like to dedicate this work to lecturers and my friends who supported and helped me directly and indirectly.

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ABSTRACT

Drilling in swelling clay formation is rather challenging owing to the delicate formation of the wellbore. This is mostly because of the propensity of clay to swell when in contact with water. The high reactivity of swelling clays with water causes their constituents to swell and these can cause severe drilling problems, such as damage to the production zone. Potassium chloride (KCl) has been the most typical shale swelling control additive used to formulate WBM. However, at higher concentrations of KCl in WBM, the mud separates into two phases, which are liquid and sediments, and the swelling-control activity of the KCl is short-lived in WBM. A better efficient clay swelling-control additive, such as composite of polymer and nanoparticle, might be more effective. Therefore, in this study, the efficiency of synthesized polypropylene based nanosilica composite (PP-SiO₂ NC) on clay swelling was carried out and its performance was compared to KCl mud and other types of water based mud. Samples of shale from Simpang Renggam shale formation were selected and tested for swelling behaviour over five different types of WBMs, which are (i) Basic mud (ii) KCl mud (iii) PP-SiO₂ NC mud, (iv) Commercial SiO₂ NP mud, and (v) Mixture of KCl and PP-SiO₂ NC mud. At normal temperature 80°F and elevated temperature 250 °F, PP- SiO₂ NC mud gave better results in the rheological properties such as gel strength, plastic viscosity, and yield point compared to other type of WBM. Improved shale swelling inhibition were achieved at a lower concentration (0.3 -1.0 g) of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC compared to 30g conventional KCl mud, which is required to attain its optimum inhibition level. 0.6g of PP-SiO₂ NC based mud alone prove to be the best formulation as it only cause shale to swell up to 7.11% compared to KCl mud at 15.3%, mixture of KCl and PP-SiO₂ NC mud at 9.2%, and commercial SiO₂ NP mud at 10%. Indubitably, the synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC mud provide better in rheological properties at normal and elevated temperature and more efficient in minimizing clay swelling behaviour compared to other type of WBM and it has a higher propensity to prevent loss of filtrates into the formation.

ABSTRAK

Penggerudian di syal agak sukar kerana perlu menghadapi isu formasi yang lembut dalam lubang telaga. Ianya disebabkan oleh ciri-ciri pembengkakan syal terutama apabila bersentuhan dengan air. Kereaktifan tinggi pada syal apabila bersentuhan dengan air menyebabkan komponen pada tanah liat membengkak dan ini menyebabkan berlaku banyak masalah seperti kerosakan pada zon pengeluaran. KCl telah menjadi aditif kawalan bengkak yang paling biasa digunakan untuk merumuskan WBM. Walau bagaimanapun, pada kepekatan KCl yang lebih tinggi di WBM, lumpur itu memisahkan dua fasa, iaitu cecair dan sedimen, dan aktiviti pengendalian bengkak KCl mempunyai jangka hayat yang pendek. Aditif pengawalan bengkak tanah liat yang lebih baik, seperti komposit polimer dan nanopartikel, mungkin lebih berkesan. Dalam kajian ini, kecekapan komposit polypropylene nanosilica (PP-SiO₂ NC) pada kebengkakan tanah liat dijalankan dan prestasinya dibandingkan dengan lumpur KCl and lumpur WBM yang lain. Sampel syal dari Simpang Renggam telah dipilih dan diuji untuk tingkah laku bengkak ke atas lima jenis WBM yang berbeza, iaitu (i) Lumpur asas (ii) Lumpur KCl (iii) Lumpur PP-SiO₂ NC (iv) Lumpur komersial SiO₂ NP, dan (v) Lumpur campuran KCl dan PP-SiO₂ NC. Pada suhu normal 80 °F dan suhu tinggi 250 °F, lumpur PP-SiO₂ NC memberikan hasil yang lebih baik dalam sifat reologi seperti kekuatan gel, kelikatan plastik, dan titik hasil berbanding dengan jenis WBM yang lain. Perencatan bengkak syal yang lebih baik dicapai pada kepekatan yang lebih rendah (0.3 -1.0 g) lumpur PP-SiO₂ NC yang disintesis berbanding dengan 30g lumpur KCl, yang diperlukan untuk mencapai tahap perencatan optimumnya. 0.6g lumpur PP-SiO₂ NC menjadi formulasi terbaik kerana ia hanya menyebabkan syal membengkak sehingga 7.11% berbanding lumpur KCl pada 15.3%, campuran KCl dan PP-SiO₂ NC lumpur pada 9.2%, dan lumpur komersial SiO₂ NP pada 10%. Secara tidak langsung, lumpur PP-SiO₂ NC yang disintesis memberikan prestasi lebih baik dalam sifat rheologi pada suhu normal dan suhu tinggi dan lebih berkesan dalam mengurangkan pembengkakan tanah liat berbanding dengan jenis WBM yang lain dan ia mempunyai kecenderungan yang lebih tinggi untuk mencegah kehilangan filtrat ke dalam formasi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	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	xv
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xvi
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Background of Study	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	4
	1.3 Objectives	5
	1.4 Scope of Study	6
	1.5 Significance of the Study	6
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	9
	2.1 Overview on Shale	9
	2.1.1 Shale Types	9
	2.1.2 Shale Mineralogy	13
	2.2 X-ray Diffraction Analysis	16
	2.3 Cation Exchange Capacity	17
	2.4 Shale Swelling	19
	2.5 Shale Dispersion	22
	2.6 Shale Hydration	23
	2.7 Borehole Instability	25

2.7.1	Stages of Shale Instability	26
2.8	Shale Stabilizing Additives	29
2.8.1	Salts	30
2.8.2	Polymer With Special Affinity	32
2.9	Deficits of Potassium Chloride	37
2.9.1	Dehydration of Salts	37
2.9.2	Weak Bonds with Shale Particles	38
2.9.3	Insoluble Residue of KCl Salts	38
2.10	Polypropylene	39
2.11	Nanosilica	40
2.12	Applications of Polymer Nanocomposite in Drilling Fluids	42
2.12.1	Application of Polymer Nanocomposites for Enhanced Rheological Properties	43
2.12.2	Application of Polymer Nanocomposites for HPHT Environments	47
2.12.3	Application of Polymer Nanocomposites for Shale Swelling	50
2.13	Key Summary	52
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	55
3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	Framework	56
3.3	Synthesis of Polymer-Nano Composite Suspension	56
3.4	Characterization of PP-SiO ₂ Nanocomposite	58
3.4.1	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR)	58
3.4.2	Field Electron Scanning Microscopy (FESEM)	58
3.4.3	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA)	58
3.5	Preparation of Drilling Mud	59
3.5.1	Preparation of Basic WBM	59
3.5.2	Preparation of Polypropylene Based Silica Nanocomposite Based Mud	61
3.6	Rheological Measurement	61
3.6.1	Determination of Mud Weight	62
3.6.2	Determination of the pH	63

3.6.3	Determination of Plastic Viscosity, Yield Point and Gel Strength	63
3.6.4	Determination of Mud Filtration and Filter Cake Thickness	65
3.6.5	High Temperature Roller Oven	66
3.7	XRD Test of Shale	67
3.8	Swelling Test Using Linear Swell Meter (LSM)	68
3.8.1	Linear Swell Meter Operation	69
3.8.2	Shale Pellet Preparation	69
3.8.3	Installation of Specimen Plugs on Fann Linear Swell Meter Measuring Head	74
3.8.4	Numerical Measurement	76
3.8.5	Limitations of the Linear Swelling Meter	76
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	79
4.1	Introduction	79
4.2	Characterization analysis of PP-SiO ₂ nanocomposite	79
4.2.1	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) Analysis	79
4.2.2	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy (FESEM) Analysis	81
4.2.3	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA)	83
4.3	Characterization Analysis of Shale Core	85
4.3.1	X-ray Diffraction (XRD) Analysis	85
4.4	Rheological Properties Analysis	86
4.4.1	Effect of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ composite over Plastic Viscosity of Water- Based Drilling Fluids	88
4.4.2	Effect of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ composite over Yield Point of Water- Based Drilling Fluids	89
4.4.3	Effect of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ Composite Over 10-s and 10-min Gel Strength of Water- Based Drilling Fluids	91
4.4.4	Effect of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ Composite Over Filtrate Loss Volume of Water-Based Drilling Fluids	93
4.5	Shale Swelling Analysis	95

4.5.1	Effect of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ NC and Conventional KCl over Shale Swelling	95
4.5.2	Effect of Commercial SiO ₂ and Three Different Concentration of Synthesized PP-SiO ₂ NC over Shale Swelling	96
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		99
5.1	Conclusion	99
5.2	Recommendations	100
REFERENCES		101
Appendices		105-106

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 2.1	Compositions of shale from Mexico, Norway and Malaysia, determined by XRD	13
Table 2.2	Major clay minerals properties	15
Table 2.3	Cation exchange capacity (CEC) values of clay minerals.	17
Table 2.4	Classification of shale problem	23
Table 2.5	Typical shale problems in drilling operation	28
Table 2.6	Physical and Chemical Properties of Polypropylene	39
Table 2.7	Physical and chemical properties of nanosilica	40
Table 2.8	PNCs rheological performance in drilling operations	44
Table 2.9	PNCs performance under HPHT in drilling operations	49
Table 3.1	Formulation of Drilling Mud System	60
Table 3.2	Composition of Drilling Mud system	60
Table 3.3	Rheological Properties Test	61
Table 4.1	Rheological properties of all mud sample at room temperature (80 °F)	87
Table 4.2	Rheological properties of all mud sample at high temperature (250 °F)	87

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 2.1	Main compositions of shale	10
Figure 2.2	(a) Kaolinite structure, (b) SEM image of kaolinite	11
Figure 2.3	(a) Illite structure, (b) SEM Image of illite	11
Figure 2.4	(a) Montmorillonite structure and (b) SEM image of montmorillonite	12
Figure 2.5	Division of silicates. Bold letters are minerals found in bentonite	14
Figure 2.6	(a) Single silicon tetrahedron, (b) Silicon tetrahedron sheet arranged in hexagon (c) Single alumina octahedron and (d) Sheet structure of alumina or magnesium octahedron	15
Figure 2.7	Interlayer spacing from XRD against normalized maximum load from indentation tests	17
Figure 2.8	Effect of potassium chloride and ammonium chloride in concentration of Sabah shale	20
Figure 2.9	Effect of KCl with different polymer in Terengganu shale	20
Figure 2.10	The effect of adding polymer in Sabah and Terengganu fields' shale	21
Figure 2.11	Crystalline swelling	21
Figure 2.12	The phenomenon of shale dispersion	23
Figure 2.13	Hydration swelling: Positively charged ions (cations) being attracted to the negatively charged basal planes of shales	25
Figure 2.14	Shale condition before drilling	27
Figure 2.15	Shale condition after drilling	28
Figure 2.16	Shale condition after caving occur	29
Figure 2.17	Potassium chloride performance compare to the others systems performed by LSM	31
Figure 2.18	Monomeric amine shale inhibitor	33
Figure 2.19	Oligomeric amine shale inhibitor	33
Figure 2.20	Different types of viscosifiers with different concentrations in KCl-based mud system	34
Figure 2.21	Depiction of simple salts and inhibition	38

Figure 2.22	Transmission electron microscopy images of spherical silicon nanoparticles from 5 nanometers to 50 nanometers	42
Figure 2.23	Thermal gravimetric analysis of acrylamide polymer and ZnO nanoparticles-acrylamide polymer composite	48
Figure 2.24	(a) Weight loss of synthesized composite observed at 60 % (b) shale swelling and recovery percent	51
Figure 2.25	(a) Shale mineralogy (b) recovery rate increase of shale (87-97 wt. %) with increase in fluids concentration (0.3-1.0 wt. %)	52
Figure 2.26	Formation Process of PP-SiO ₂ NCs	53
Figure 3.1	Framework Methodology	56
Figure 3.2	Mud balance	63
Figure 3.3	Rheometer	64
Figure 3.4	API Filter Press	66
Figure 3.5	Roller oven	67
Figure 3.6	XRD instrument	68
Figure 3.7	FANN Model 2100 Linear Swell Meter.	68
Figure 3.8	Experimental mechanism for shale swelling	69
Figure 3.9	(a) Compactor cell (b) alignment of chamber cap “I” with specimen chamber “Arrow”	71
Figure 3.10	Core and core chamber layout	71
Figure 3.11	Core chamber assembly onto compactor cylinder	72
Figure 3.12	Panel valve and pressure gauge on compactor cell	72
Figure 3.13	Core extraction tool	73
Figure 3.14	Sample plug prepared from shale powder using compactor	73
Figure 3.15	Shale plug were kept in desiccators	74
Figure 3.16	(a) Components of core stack (b) Core stack (c) installation of core holder (d) core holder assembly locked with core holder.	75
Figure 3.17	Core holder assembly hanged over measuring head	75
Figure 3.18	Core holder assembly submerged in the drilling mud	76
Figure 4.1	FTIR analysis of synthesized polypropylene-based nanosilica composite	81
Figure 4.2	(a) FESEM images of polypropylene; (b) FESEM images of polyethylene-block-poly (ethylene glycol); (c) EDX spectra of polyethylene-block-poly (ethylene glycol); (d) FESEM image of polypropylene-based silica nanocomposite; (e) FESEM image of polypropylene-based silica nanocomposite; (f) EDX spectra of polypropylene-based silica nanocomposite	82

Figure 4.3	Thermal behavior of polypropylene and polypropylene-based silica nanocomposite	84
Figure 4.4	Shale Composition (%)	86
Figure 4.5	Comparison of Plastic Viscosities Before and After Aging	89
Figure 4.6	Comparison of Yield Point before and After Aging	90
Figure 4.7	Effect of synthesized PP-SiO ₂ composite over 10-sec GS WBDF	91
Figure 4.8	Effect of synthesized PP-SiO ₂ composite over 10-min GS WBDF	92
Figure 4.9	Effect of synthesized PP-SiO ₂ composite compare to conventional drilling fluids over API filtrate loss volume	94
Figure 4.10	Linear Swell Meter results of basic, KCl, PP-SiO ₂ NC, and a mixture between KCl and PP-SiO ₂ NC muds.	96
Figure 4.11	Linear Swell Meter results of Commercial SiO ₂ and Three Different Concentration of PP-SiO ₂ NC muds.	98

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KCl	-	Potassium Chloride
PP-SiO ₂	-	Polypropylene Nanosilica
PNC	-	Polymer Nanocomposites
PAM	-	Polyacrylamide
LPLT	-	Low Pressure Low Temperature
HPHT	-	High Pressure High Temperature
PPgMA	-	Polypropylene Grafted Maleic Anhydride
XRD	-	X-ray Diffraction
TEM	-	Transmission Electron Microscopy
XRF	-	X-ray Florescence
FESEM	-	Field Electron Scanning Microscopy
FTIR	-	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy
LSM	-	Linear Swell Meter
PP	-	Polypropylene
NP	-	Nanoparticles
MA	-	Maleic Anhydride
SiO ₂	-	Nanosilica
CEC	-	Cation Exchange Capacity
WBDF	-	Water Based Drilling Fluid
OBM	-	Oil Based Mud
CMC	-	Carboxy Methyl Cellulose
PAC	-	Polynomic Cellulose
PHPA	-	Partially Hydrolized Polyacrylamide
XG	-	Xanthan gum
PV	-	Plastic Viscosity
YP	-	Yield Point
GS	-	Gel Strength
MWCNT	-	Multiwall Carbon Nanotubes
TGA	-	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis
EDA-G	-	Ethylenediamine Modified Graphene
API	-	American Petroleum Institute

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix A	XRD Results	105

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Shales are clastic sedimentary rock type of fine-grained constituents, which is a mixture of clay flakes and silt-sized particles (tiny fragments) of other minerals, such as calcite and quartz. Shale has the tendency to absorb water and swell owing to the presence of clay in the shale. This is due to the high sensitivity of clay minerals in water because of their high water absorption capacity. Montmorillonite is a common typical water sensitive clay. Other water sensitive clays are smectite/inter layered montmorillonite and illite. Kaolinite, Chlorite, apalite, feldspar, quartz, gypsum and carbonate are also clay rock minerals with lower swelling affinities (Ismail, 1996).

More than 75% of the drilled formations worldwide are composed of shale (Berry, 2008). The swelling characteristics of different rock types to mud combinations is crucial in predicting different problems of drilling. It will also help to determine the appropriate mud system to make stable the unforgiving shale environment. This rock characteristic is very complex and is dependent on the type of rock and the nature of the mud compositions, and greatly contributes to caving, heaving, sloughing and progressive wellbore expansion problems in the shale section of the wellbore (Chenevert, 1989). As shale encounters water, there is an exchange of which induces the rock to absorb water. Thus, swelling of shale swells and weakened rock formation (Eurock, 1996). Furthermore, shale swelling leads to easy parting of shale particles from both the drilled debris and wall of the borehole seeping into the mud system as another solid material. This leads to substantial changes in the muds rheological properties, causing other wellbore problems, such as induced fracturing and pipe sticking (Chenevert,1989).

It is generally understood that high contents of montmorillonite (smectite clay) in the shale is the major cause for undue shale swelling characteristics. In drilling, it is always very difficult to comprehend the unusual shale swelling characteristics found in some shale rocks with little or no swelling clays. Nevertheless, some rich shale formations, in which montmorillonite is the highest constituent contain less swelling behavior in comparison with shales of low stretchy clay content. This help other factors to control the shale-swelling tendency (Amanullah, 1993). A significant consideration in these drilled formations is on how to safeguard the water-sensitive clays from having contact with water and to lessen problems caused by the adsorption of water by the clay. Numerous investigations have been carried out to analyze the performances of different mud additive for shale swelling reduction. Potassium Chloride (KCl) is still considered as the most efficient additive for shale stabilization via cationic exchange (Boyd, 2012). It is believed to be the most functional shale stabilizer in conventional based mud. However, wells drilled with KCl drilling mud needs high amount of K^+ ions to constrain shale. Brien and Chenevert (1973), Clark et al. (1976), and Chang and Leong (2014) reported that high KCl concentration in WBM can separate KCl into two phases, such as sediment and liquid. High filtration loss volumes have been achieved by using KCl based drilling mud.

Polymeric materials in drilling mud were developed to improve rheological properties (Guo *et al.*, 2006) and inhibit shale swelling behaviour (Fritz and Jarrett, 2012; Deville et al., 2011). Polymers contained remarkable hydrophilicity and a well-proportioned hydrodynamic volume successive to hydration, which can make the drilling mud rheological properties to be stable, and subsequently control the filtrates loss properties. As well depth rises, the thermal gradient increases, which leads to harsh downhole environment. Polymer behavior in drilling fluids at high temperature is indicative of the effectiveness of such polymer (Mao et al., 2015). Results from fields indicates that polymeric based drilling fluid are unstable at high temperature, and are always prone to degradation (Amanullah *et al.*, 2011). Thus, drilling personnel's are seeking for novel materials that are physically small, environmental friendly, multi-functional, chemically and thermally stable to be added in drilling fluid for enhanced drilling operation (Amanullah and Al-Tahini, 2009; Hoelscher *et al.*, 2013; Zakaria *et al.*, 2012).

Applications of nanotechnology have been envisaged to usher in new opportunities for exploration phase especially in drilling industry. Drilling fluid rheology and thermal stability can be improved with nanoparticles (NPs) (Abdo and Haneef, 2013). Different applications of NPs in drilling muds have been reported, and they range from viscosity stabilization, prevention of loss circulation at high temperature, enhancing the carrying ability of the mud of drilled cuttings, abating water seepage into the formation, dehydrating clay and minimizing pipe-sticking incidents. Variety of NPs have been examined for viscosity enhancement and shale inhibition characteristics of drilling muds. The most investigated NPs for drilling are nanosilica, multi-walled carbon nanotubes, graphene oxide, copper oxide and zinc oxide and (William *et al.*, 2014).

Micro-nanoparticle composite can be the needed solution for the shale swelling inhibition. Composite materials of organic polymer/inorganic nanoparticle have been widely examined for a long time as reported in literatures. When NP phase in the polymer matrix become nanosized (1-100 nm), they are referred to as polymer nanocomposites (PNCs) (Kickelbick, 2003; Prasad and Geckeler, 2011). PNCs indicates the production and manipulation of polymer or copolymer materials with NPs dispersed in the polymer matrix with at least one of its dimension in the nanometer range of 1-100 nm (Kickelbick, 2003). The tiny size, high area of surface to volume ratio, and high surface energy of NPs empowers it to adsorb over the surface of the clay and seals its pore throats. Commonly used shale inhibitive polymer, such as partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide (PHPA) have been proven to have the characteristics of coating the shale surface (Hale and Mody, 1993). Thus, shale plugging and coating can be attained with the combination of polymeric material and nanoparticle to form a nanocomposite with enhanced properties more than the properties of the individual constituent. PNC can be produced by directly inserting the nanofiller into the polymer, or by grafting NP into the polymer. It can also be produced through entrapment of the polymer in the NP, such as entrapment of hydrophobic chemically inert polypropylene (PP) at the surface of nanosilica (Zu *et al.*, 2013). This will enhance the properties of the polymer matrix, such as viscoelastic, stronger flame resistant, self-assembly, barrier properties, thermal and chemical stability, and improve the alterations in surface wettability.

Literatures on PNC has showed that the advances made on PNC as an additive of drilling mud is still recent, and its full application in oil and gas industry, more importantly the drilling industry is still in the early stage. Hence, this study was conducted to examine the performance of water-based mud (WBM) formulated with different concentrations of synthesized polypropylene nanosilica (PP-nanosilica) composite as it influences the WBM rheological properties, and its effect on shale swelling inhibition.

1.2 Problem Statement

Recently, one of the most serious issues confronting drillers in the oil and gas industry is on how to develop a smart, cost effective and environmentally friendly WBM which can ensure stability of the mud's rheological properties at high pressure high temperature (HPHT) conditions and enhance shale inhibition properties of the mud (Chu *et al.*, 2013; Mao *et al.*, 2015). Instability in muds rheology and shale may cause different serious wellbore problems that will hinder effective hydrocarbons productions. These problems can occur in the form of high loss of filtrates into the producing formation, spud losses, reduce drilled cutting and other solids particles transportation efficiency, reduce drilling rate, shale collapse and sloughing, and increase differential stuck pipe (DeNinno *et al.*, 2016; Mohiuddin *et al.*, 2007). These problems can be resolved if the mud rheological properties, such as plastic viscosity (PV), yield point (YP) filtrates loss control volumes, lubricity are improved and shale swelling behavior are inhibited by the drilling mud. While KCl have been mostly employed to dehydrate clay and inhibit shale swelling behaviour, its limitation of forming two phases in drilling mud have been a serious concern to drilling personnels. High KCl concentration in WBM can cause KCl to develop into two phases, such as liquid and sediments. These sediments in drilling mud can lower the drilling rate, thus prompting higher pump power requirements. Besides, it is not eco-friendly when high concentrations are required to minimize shale high swelling rate. Therefore, low concentrations of KCl are preferred in the drilling mud, but the usage of low concentrations of KCl alone is somewhat ineffective in reducing shale instability (Deville, Halliburton, 2011). It is thought that PHPA-KCl polymer mud system can

achieve the desired shale swelling inhibition, but this combination also has proven to be inactive in unforgiving formations, such as shale, HPHT, deep-water and ultra – deep water (Berry, 2005). Therefore, to address these problems, the combination of hydrophobic chemically inert PP with the ability to repel water molecules in the mud owing to its hydrophobicity and nanosilica proven to be effective in plugging the shale nano-void space were used to inhibit shale-swelling characteristics and drill-in effectively in the unforgiving formations. The synthesized PP-nanosilica composite based drilling mud were used in this study on account of their attractive properties and functionalities, such as enhanced shale plugging characteristics, rheological properties, thermal and chemical stability.

1.3 Objectives

The main aim of this study was to enhance the rheological properties and shale inhibition characteristics of conventional WBM using synthesized PP-SiO₂ composite. This study was conducted to achieve the outlined objectives:

- i. To synthesize and characterize PP-SiO₂ NC material.
- ii. To investigate the rheological properties of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC in WBM at different concentrations and compared with typical rheological properties of drilling fluids employed for drilling in shale formation at low pressure-low temperature (LPLT) and high pressure-high temperature (HPHT) conditions.
- iii. To identify the types of minerals of different shale samples in order to determine the most suitable shale to be used for easier facilitation of shale swelling data interpretation.
- iv. To analyze the clay hydration and shale swelling behavior of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC in WBM on the selected shale sample.

1.4 Scope of Study

The scopes of this study are as follows:

- i. Synthesizing, and characterizing PP-SiO₂ NC material.
- ii. Formulating five muds system: basic mud, KCl mud, PP-SiO₂ NC mud, SiO₂ NP mud, and a mixture between KCl and PP-SiO₂ NC mud systems.
- iii. Different weight amounts of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC of 0.3g, 0.6g, and 1.0g was added to the prepared WBM.
- iv. Mineral components and clay compositions were identified using x-ray diffraction for different types of shale samples.
- v. The rheological properties of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC based drilling mud, such as plastic viscosity, yield point, gel strength, API filtrate loss volumes compared with those of based mud and KCl mud employed for drilling shale under LPLT and elevated temperature.
- vi. Shale swelling behavior of synthesized PP-SiO₂ NC drilling fluids are examined at 3 different concentrations from 0.3 g, 0.6 g, and 1.0 g and compared with other type of water based mud using Linear Swell Meter equipment.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is expected that this study will offer the following contributions;

1. The findings of this study could lead to a new approach and prospects in improving drilling operations especially clay dehydration, shale swelling inhibition and environmental consideration under elevated temperature.
2. The outcomes of this study could also provide optimum rheological properties needed to effectively drill shale formation under both LPLT and elevated temperature conditions.

3. Application in the real field could benefit the oil and gas industry in terms of making the drilling of sensitive reactive water formation more efficient and economic.
4. The polymer and nanoparticle product can be used in other areas of oil and gas industry, such as EOR, workover, and completion jobs.

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