Introduction

The oriented structure of polymers has been extensively investigated owing to its enhancement in many properties. Polymer composites are important commercial materials with various applications. As known, polymers filled with nanoscale fillers are recognized as polymer nanocomposites. Apparently, with addition of nanoscale fillers into polymers, robust materials can potentially be produced due to the synergistic effects (cooperating for enhanced effects) arising from the blending of various fillers within the polymer matrix.
process[1]. Nano-silicone oxide (SiO₂) with a large surface area is widely used in polyolefin composites. Its application is now mainly focused on the improvement of mechanical and electrical properties [2-4]. Among all the non-destructive monitoring techniques, the Polarization and Depolarization Current (PDC) measurement is gaining popularity due to its ability to assess the conductivity of HV insulations within the initial periods after a DC step voltage application. PDC analysis can easily identify whether the cause of insulation failure is due to conduction such as degradation or aging process caused by temperature effects. The dielectric properties of an insulating material change with moisture, aging, and contamination[5]. The PDC patterns of mineral oil, biodegradable oil, and paper as transformers insulation have been studied by many researchers such as [5-7]. But until now, there are no investigations on PDC done for LLDPE/NR nanocomposite as a new insulation. Study on the PDC pattern of polymer nanocomposite is required as an increasing number of power utilities nowadays choose polymer nanocomposite as a new insulation due to its unique properties. This paper studied the PDC pattern of LLDPE-NR at different percentage amount of SiO₂. In this paper, PDC technique is used to monitor the conductivity variations due to its polarization and depolarization current values. Different types of nano-filler give different variations.

### 2.0 SAMPLE AND MATERIAL PREPARATION

LLDPE used in this study is a commercial linear low density polyethylene from Titan Chemical, Malaysia. It has a density of 0.918 g/cm³, a melt index of 0.25 g/min. Nanoparticle of silicon oxide is made from China with a particle size of about 50 nm. Natural rubber grade SMR CV 60 supplied by Taiko Plantations Sdn Bhd was used for blending and mixing with LLDPE and nano-filler. Polyethylene nanocomposites were prepared by melt mixing at 165°C using a Brabender type model 835201.041 mixer with chamber size of 50 cm³. The mixer has a high shear force and the screw speed was controlled at 35 rpm with the mixing time of 2 minutes. The polymer nanocomposites were finally prepared into square shape of 10 cm x 10 cm with the thickness of 3 mm by hot pressing at 170°C for 10 minutes. Four types of polyethylene nanocomposite square shaped with a dimension of 10 cm x 10 cm were prepared with concentrations of nano-filler of 0, 1, 3, 5 and 7 wt %, respectively. All the preparation for the test sample and material are shown in Table 1.

### Table 1 Compound formulations and designation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Sample</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfilled LLDPE</td>
<td>100 0 0</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDPE + Natural Rubber</td>
<td>80 20 0</td>
<td>A0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDPE + Natural Rubber + SiO₂</td>
<td>80 20 1</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDPE + Natural Rubber</td>
<td>80 20 3</td>
<td>A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDPE + Natural Rubber + SiO₂</td>
<td>80 20 5</td>
<td>A5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDPE + Natural Rubber</td>
<td>80 20 7</td>
<td>A7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.0 PDC THEORY AND CONCEPT

#### 3.1 Insulation Conductivity Concept

By examination of the PDC curves, parameters such as conductivity and moisture content in the insulation can be estimated. Figure 1 shows example of PDC curve in db plot. The figure shows the oil conductivity, oil properties, geometry, aging and water content influence on the PDC-Curves[8]. Based on the figure the conductivity of the insulation can be measured from the front tail of the PDC curve. Value of conductivity affects the polarization current mainly in a time range t < 100s. Higher conductivity leads to a higher current value.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1** Oil conductivity, oil properties, geometry, aging and water content influence on the PDC-Curves[8]

The estimation of the conductivity for HV insulation under polarization and depolarization test result can be expressed from the PDC value [5, 6, 9-11]. The test object can be a single dielectric material or an arrangement of several dielectric materials in series or in parallel. For more than one dielectric material, σ, ε₀, and f(t) represent the composite conductivity, relative permittivity and dielectric response function of this heterogeneous test object respectively. Assuming that the test object is totally discharged and that a step voltage is applied with the following characteristics [6]:

\[
U(t) = \begin{cases} 
0 & t < 0 \\
U_0 & 0 \leq t \leq t_c \\
0 & t > t_c 
\end{cases}
\]

This will give zero current for times before t = 0, and so-called polarization currents for times 0 ≤ t ≤ t_c. The polarization current is built up in two parts, one part is related to the conductivity of the test object and the other is related to the activation of the different polarization processes within the test object. The polarization (charging) current through the object can thus be expressed as [5, 6, 9-11]:

\[
I_p(t) = c_0 \sigma \int_0^t f(\tau) d\tau + f(t)
\]

Once the step voltage is replaced by a short circuit, a depolarization current is built up. The magnitude of the depolarization current is expressed as [5, 6, 9-11]:

\[
I_d(t) = c_0 \sigma \left( f(t) - f(t + t_c) \right)
\]

where t is the time during which the voltage has been applied to the test object.

From the measurements of polarization and depolarization currents, it is possible to estimate the dc conductivity σ of the test object. If the test object is charged for a sufficiently long time so...
that \( f(t + \epsilon) \equiv 0 \), equation (2) and equation (3) can be combined to express the dc conductivity of the composite dielectric as [5, 6, 9-11]

\[
\sigma = \frac{C_s}{\epsilon_0 t} [I_p(t) - I_d(t)]
\]  

(4)

3.2 PDC Measurement Technique

The polarization currents measurement is performed by applying a dc voltage step on the dielectric materials and depolarization current is measured by removing the dc voltage source incorporating with a switch which turn on to short circuit at the under tested objects. The dc voltage applied was 1000V for about 10,000 seconds for polarization and depolarization time. The principles of PDC measurement is shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2 Principle of test arrangement for PDC measurement](image)

4.0 PDC MEASUREMENT RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Polarization and Depolarization Current Analysis

The results for polarization and depolarization currents measured for samples A and A0 are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. As seen in the figures, A0 has lower polarization and depolarization current values than sample A. It found that the compound of 80% LLDPE and 20% natural rubber can improve the resistivity of the material.

![Figure 3 Polarization current values for sample A and A0](image)

![Figure 4 Depolarization current values for sample A and A0](image)

The results for polarization and depolarization currents measured for samples A1-A5 are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Based on the plotted graph, sample A5 has the lowest polarization and depolarization current value. This also means that this sample has the lower conductivity level compared with the others group A samples. Sample A5 that contained 5 wt% of SiO2 shows the higher resistivity based on the lowest polarization current recorded. It is found that the amount of 5 wt% of SiO2 will give the optimum composition for LLDPE-NR polymer in order to increase the resistivity of the material. The interaction between the matrix and the fillers is related to the chemical properties of the filler surface and the interfacial area between the matrix and the fillers.

![Figure 5 Polarization current values for sample A1, A3, A5 and A7](image)

![Figure 6 Depolarization current values for sample A1, A3, A5 and A7](image)

4.2 Conductivity Variation Analysis

Polarization and depolarization current measurement enables estimation to be made on the condition (moisture and ageing) of insulation with different conductivities. From Equation (4), it proves that conductivity of the insulation is influenced by polarization and depolarization current values. Figure 7 shows the conductivity variations for unfilled LLDPE and LLDPE-NR samples. Based on the plotted graph, LLDPE-NR sample has lower conductivity as compared with pure LLDPE sample.
Different types of nano-filler and percentage of concentration will give different values of polarization and depolarization current values. It can be observed, changes in insulation polarization and depolarization current values tend to affect the value of conductivity. From the results, it can be concluded that adding nano particles into LLDPE nanocomposite can reduce the PDC values. However, different amount of nano-fillers will give different results. By reducing the conductivity to the lowest value, it can be known that a small amount of nano-fillers is separated inside the dielectric with a certain wide distance, which can be known as 'extra traps' for the dielectric, and therefore improve the insulation property. However, if more nano particles added into the LLDPE, for example 5% wt has showed a better insulation property than the pure sample with the higher conductivity compared to the samples of 1% and 3% wt. This is because that some of the nano-fillers are too closed to each other, and each nano particle has an interaction zone around it that resulting some overlap of interaction zones. For higher contents of nano-filler, the probability of interaction zones overlap is getting higher, and therefore, the nano particles may aligned together which helps the charges moving across the dielectric. The results from PDC measurements can be used to determine the insulating condition properties of LLDPE nano composite. Higher values of polarization and depolarization currents contribute to higher conductivity of the materials. The trends of the conductivity variation were found to be dependent on the polarization and depolarization current values.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia under grant (QJ130000.7123.00009 and R.J130000.78234F097) and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia for financial support, TNB Research Sdn Bhd for equipment support and Taiko Plantation Sdn Bhd as a supplier of Natural Rubber.

REFERENCES